

HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS*?
LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
JOE WERNER OF ILWU LOCAL 8

INTERVIEWEES: JOE WERNER, ELSIE WERNER

INTERVIEWER: HOWARD KIMELDORF

SUBJECTS: SCREENING; INTEGRATING THE WATERFRONT; EDITH GREEN; MECHANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION AGREEMENT OF 1960; 1934 STRIKE VETERANS; VIOLENCE DURING STRIKES; 1934 SHOOTING; SCABS; HARRY BRIDGES; SAN FRANCISCO AND PORTLAND RELATIONS; CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS; JIMMY HOFFA; ROSCO CRAYCRAFT; BLACK WORKERS IN PORTLAND

LOCATION: PORTLAND, OREGON

DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1981 and JULY 15, 1985

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 04:28:32

FILE NAME: WernerJoe_HKOHP_1981-1985_Audio_acc5798-001.wav

The Labor Archives of Washington is committed to preserving the voices and stories of individuals who have contributed to the labor movement's rich history. The LAW presents oral history interviews as part of its contribution to helping curate and create access to a broad and inclusive historical record. These interviews contain the personal recollections and opinions of the individuals involved and, therefore, may contain language, ideas or stereotypes that are offensive or harmful to others.

Individual oral histories cannot serve as the sole source of historical information about an institution or event. These narratives do not represent the views of the Labor Archives of Washington, Libraries Special Collections, or the University of Washington, past or present.

[00:00:00] **HOWARD KIMELDORF:** —12/14/81 and I'd like to ask you some basic questions about how you got onto the waterfront in the first place. What took you to the waterfront?

[00:00:14] **JOE WERNER:** You can ask me any questions, and I'll answer them. If I don't want to, I won't!

[00:00:17] **HOWARD:** Fair enough. And, in fact, if you want to answer off the tape, just let me know and I'll shut the tape off on some questions, ok?

[00:00:22] **JOE:** Ok, ok.

[00:00:23] **HOWARD:** So, why don't you tell me the year you came on the waterfront, and why?

[00:00:28] **JOE:** Oh, gee, that's a long story. I'll see if I can round it up a little.

It was around 1928, and the reason was that I got married, and I wanted to stay in town. See, before, I was mining—well, I was really traveling. I wanted to see the world. I left Europe shortly after World War I, and I've been all over the Orient. I've been to South America; then finally when I got up to [inaudible] in Japan, I come over to the United States. I wanted to see what the country was like. But then, after I got married, I wanted to remain in Portland [Oregon]. Because that's where my wife's folks were and all that. I knew the sea, I knew the shipping; I knew boats.

[00:01:30] **HOWARD:** Because of your experience in the war, or did you know them beforehand as well?

[00:01:34] **JOE:** Well, I sailed before. I served in the German Navy at the time—

[00:01:39] **HOWARD:** Hi, Elsie!

[00:01:40] **ELSIE WERNER:** Hi! You're Howard.

[00:01:42] **HOWARD:** How're you doing? Howard—that's the one. Finally met!

[00:01:45] **ELSIE:** You must be some relation to my insurance man! [pause]

[00:01:49] **HOWARD:** I'm not! I asked my brother about that. He said there's a Louie Kimeldorf who's not related to us at all.

[00:01:54] **ELSIE:** Is that right?

[00:01:55] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and that he's had people call him about it too.

[00:01:57] **JOE:** Elsie, by the way, you're on tape.

[00:01:59] **HOWARD:** We'll cut—

[BREAK IN THE RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

Ok, we're on tape again. You were telling me you got started in the waterfront in 1928.

[00:02:04] **JOE:** Well, just sometime in the fall of '28. The reason was because I wanted to remain in Portland. About the only thing that I was familiar with was ships. Shipping and ship ports because I'd sailed and I had experience around the ships, and so forth. And the ocean. So I went down to the waterfront.

[00:02:33] **HOWARD:** Were you raised in Portland yourself?

[00:02:35] **JOE:** No, I was raised in Germany. I was born and raised in Germany. But, to get on the waterfront and get familiar with it, it's a problem. It was at that time. Everything was gang system. It was controlled by the stevedores and the shipping companies. They had their own people in there. You didn't have a shape-up, like they have on the East Coast. It wasn't bad, but you had to get into the group. You had to be known. The people that hired you, they had to know that you knew something about a ship and so forth.

[00:03:20] **HOWARD:** If there wasn't a shape-up, how were you hired? Through a fink hall, so-called?

[00:03:27] **JOE:** Well, as a rule, there were gang leaders. We had 25 gangs at that time. That was a big hall in the Portland area at that time. The gang leaders, they would get the orders from the hall from dispatchers. They would say, You go on such a ship. You go ahead and get your men, size them up, and bring the card. The list, they used to call the card. They knew the men that could work for them. Sometime when they could use extra men, they would come on the floor and pick the men out. This process took time, to get acquainted and get known with it, the different people.

Somehow, I got in with people that knew me. I believe I was on the ship hall one time with a walking boss or a foreman—he came and he asked me for some gear that he wanted from the sailors. I remembered him, and he remembered me. He said, “Didn’t you used to sail?” I said, “Yes.” Well, he says, “Why aren’t you working?” You know, a conversation got started, and he had a gang. He said, “Next time I go out, I’ll look you up.” And I was there on the floor [next] .

The first time I got on a job, it was a lumber job. I’ll never forget it in my life. [inaudible] with a dirty end of a stick, you know. By god, they brought in a load of 2 by 4s, something to run out the dead ends on the end of a pier—well, on the ship, you know, on the tail end of it. Anyway, I didn’t know how to land the load, [scraping sound on microphone] and how to give the winch-drivers the sign, and when to pull the sling. The whole doggone load just fell apart. I had so many 2 by 4s, I didn’t know what in the hell to do with them. Old-timers were sitting up there and grinning, having a grand old laugh. Do you suppose they would come down to help me? Hell no! They said, “Well, it’s up to you now! It’s your dish.” Finally—his name was [?Joe Lombello?], the gang leader—he looked down in the hatch. He says, “Hey! Why don’t you help that guy down there? He’s in trouble!” [laughing] Well, after the—I don’t know if it was the lunch hour or dinner—he says, “You never worked longshoring, did you?” I said, “Hell no.” Not lumber like that, anyway. Lumber, it’s a trade by itself. Anyway, but I got initiated. I think we worked three, four days on the ship. The next time, there were some fellows that you already knew. You have to get acquainted.

[00:06:21] **HOWARD:** Did you work pretty much steady with a gang, then? As a rule?

[00:06:26] **JOE:** Oh no. About 1930, I joined a steady gang. Sometimes you have work four, five, ten years before you get in a steady gang. I started with a fellow by the name of Thompson. By the way, I’ll show you—I believe I have a record book of my daily earnings. Anyway, from then on, once you get in a steady gang, then you’ve got it made. You just go out with the gang. Sometimes, if the gang is off for two or three days, then you can take an extra job. That’s the way I got started. Work was pretty good at that time. I knew how to rig a ship; I even knew how to drive winches.

[00:07:14] **HOWARD:** Work was good, even in the Depression, huh? By 1930, work was still good?

[00:07:20] **JOE:** By 1930, [work] was tough. I’m talking about ‘28, ‘29. Work was pretty good. Lumber was moving. China took lots of lumber. Paper was moving. Flour to the East Coast. There was plenty of work.

[00:07:39] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question about that, too, also. What was the work like? Was it an intense speed-up as you recall? Or, do you have any images of what the work process was like in those days?

[00:07:50] **JOE:** Well, it was hard work. There was no mechanization of any kind at that time. You had to produce. If you couldn’t produce, you simply couldn’t hold a job on a gang. That’s all there was to it. It started right from the top on down. The gang leader, the walking boss, he was responsible to produce so much, and the gang and the men have to produce. You have to work together. If they couldn’t, well, there was no production. So the process of elimination took place. But it was anywhere as near like it was on the East Coast.

[00:08:29] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that right?

[00:08:30] **JOE:** Oh, yeah. After 1930, really the Depression set in. then, the foremen and those who had influence—what they did is brought in their relatives. All the easy jobs were given to their relatives. The gang I worked in, there was a son-in-law. He was going to some kind of high educational school. He fell out, so he got a job. And there was a boy could never have been a longshoremen—I'm talking about Billy Thompson—so he got on the sling. His son-in-law who was a carpenter—there was no carpenter work—so he got in the hall, working the ships. You see, there you are—there was three men taken right there. That was only the beginning. There were many other gangs did the same thing. It finally got so bad that the employers and the employees, they got in controversies about production. They got tough. Then, when it came to renewing a contract, that's when the '34 strike broke out.

[00:09:51] **HOWARD:** Ok, before we get there, I wanted to ask you a few more questions about the earlier period.

[00:09:55] **ELSIE:** Why don't you sit over here? He's deaf!

[00:09:58] **JOE:** Oh, I'm gonna turn—

[00:09:59] **HOWARD:** I can just talk louder. That's ok. Do you have any recollection—do you ever remember any Wobblies on the waterfront? Do you know of the Wobblies—you're familiar with that? [Elsie laughs]

[00:10:11] **JOE:** I know the accusations; I know the conversations about Wobblies. But if you ask me if I knew one that actually acted like a Wobbly, I would say no. There were fellows that came in, strangers, and were pointed out to me that they were probably troublemakers—but I never got acquainted with them. But there have been men, good friends of mine and others, that had a reputation of being, they would say, Red or Wobbly. But they were good, honest-to-god citizens, and I would really shake hands with them anyplace. Because they were older; they had more experience; and they knew what they were doing. When they're good men, when he can do his work, and he stands on his own legs and can support himself, no matter what he is, he's going to be a respected man. I could name four, five—Elsie, she's more Wobbly than I am! [laughing] Because she says all the good people are really inclined to be radical—they're the best people to get along with.

[00:11:25] **HOWARD:** I agree!

[00:11:27] **ELSIE:** May I add—

[00:11:28] **HOWARD:** Sure!

[00:11:29] **ELSIE:** By "Wobbly," are you referring to communists?

[00:11:34] **HOWARD:** Not at this period. Not in the twenties. Really the Wobblies. Do you remember, the 1922 strike before you got here was a very big strike in Portland. The Wobblies had a strange role in that. The ILA [International Longshoremen's Association], which was here at the time, accused the Wobblies of being used as scabs during the '22 strike. The Wobblies said they did, but that was because the ILA was a sell-out union. Do you remember about the '22 strike? Did the guys ever talk about that?

[00:11:59] **JOE:** Where I worked there was three head men—there was George Thompson and Homer, "Big Nose" George—they were all in the '22 strike. I worked with them. When the '34 strike came, and I went on strike, they said, "Joe, don't go on strike. You're going to lose. You haven't got a chance. We went through it. We are not strike-breakers; we are sympathetic with it. But you can't win." All three went the other way. They just stayed away from the waterfront.

[00:12:35] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:12:36] **JOE:** Later they came in, but, see, they had their experience from '22. Many times they told us such-and-such a thing happened. There were strike-breakers, and it created hardships for all concerned. Then they lost the strike. That's the reason they weren't sympathetic to it. But, in '34, we were still ILA.

[00:13:04] **HOWARD:** Was the ILA here in 1928, or was it just a paper organization at that time?

[00:13:08] **JOE:** No, it was ILA from Tacoma [Washington] .

[00:13:10] **HOWARD:** It was.

[00:13:11] **JOE:** I can't think—he was a short, chunky fellow. He initiated me. In fact, when we were initiated, in the evening, and the next day I went to work—oh, no. There were three of us. This one, he hung his button right on his shirt. The walking boss said, “Hey, what is that button you've got?” He looked up and he said, “[?Omar Toladen?] , you're fired.” It was that strict. No union.

[00:13:46] **ELSIE:** May I ask what kind of a button you're talking about?

[00:13:48] **JOE:** ILA button.

[00:13:48] **ELSIE:** Oh.

[00:13:53] **JOE:** I don't want to mention the walking boss because you know him, and I know him. Later we'd become friends. But he says, “Hell, I have to do it.”

[00:14:06] **HOWARD:** Ok, I want to ask you one more question about the Wobblies. Is that how you see the Wobblies, too? At that time? They didn't seem to be much of an influence, you were saying, of the Wobblies by '28. Is that your impression?

[00:14:18] **JOE:** You mean the walking boss?

[00:14:19] **HOWARD:** No, the Wobblies.

[00:14:23] **JOE:** The Wobblies were the International Woodworkers. They were in the logging camps. There were some loggers that eventually come back on the waterfront, especially the younger men. But there was no organized Wobbly movement on the waterfront to my knowledge. We had men that admitted that they'd been in the logging camps, that they joined the Wobblies. I knew some of them later on. Bill Lawrence, he was a Wobbly, and the president from the Longview [Washington] local, he was a Wobbly.

[00:14:55] **HOWARD:** Bill Lawrence in L.A. [Los Angeles] ? Is that the Bill Lawrence you're talking about?

[00:14:55] **JOE:** Yeah.

[00:14:55] **HOWARD:** I know his dad was, too. He was a Wobbly.

[00:14:55] **ELSIE:** Well, probably the dad is who he's talking about.

[00:14:55] **JOE:** No. Bill Lawrence, he died now.

[00:15:18] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

[00:15:19] **JOE:** We were good friends.

[00:15:20] **ELSIE:** The one that was the head of the Pacific Coast Pension Association for years.

[00:15:25] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

[00:15:27] **ELSIE:** That's the one he's speaking of.

[00:15:28] **JOE:** Oh, Bill was. He told me—of course, he didn't belong. He didn't have any membership card, but his heart was still there. He was a Wobbly, no question about it.

[00:15:38] **ELSIE:** But Wobblies just don't have a part in this, in the ILWU.

[00:15:51] **HOWARD:** See, what I'm thinking is, maybe their influence had a part in the earlier phases of the union. Maybe some of the militancy rubbed off of the Wobblies and allowed the men to take the '34 strike seriously.

[00:16:04] **ELSIE:** That could be.

[00:16:06] **HOWARD:** All the work stoppages that take place after '34 seems to be an old Wobbly tactic. Striking on the job sort of stuff.

[00:16:13] **ELSIE:** But they were woodworkers.

[00:16:14] **JOE:** I wouldn't say that they weren't probably influential, some of them. They tried to show the ideas of the strike and in defense. But directly active, I don't think so. In fact, Portland—we're skipping a lot of the important stuff here. The way the '34 strike started in the first place and the way it was really organized, and after a month or two, it got really tough. We didn't know whether we'd be able to make it or not. We had the support from the public at large, but the authorities, like the police force and the others, they were directed from the money pots. They wanted to break the strike. Finally, a senator from New York, Senator. . .[pause]

[00:17:21] **ELISIE:** [whispers] Wagner.

[00:17:22] **JOE:** Senator Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner I] , came to Portland because Terminal Four in Portland is really a stronghold for strikebreakers. They had the ship [Benson?] that was tied up there, and they had board and lodging and everything right there. They could stay and work and end the strike, but the police—they were distributed up and down the harbor when the ship came in. All the strikebreakers that they got, especially from eastern Oregon, the special cops all that stuff, they all took them down to Terminal Four. That's where the stronghold was. Well—

[00:18:06] **HOWARD:** Can I ask you one other question before we get to the '34 strike, ok?

[00:18:13] **JOE:** Sure.

[00:18:14] **HOWARD:** How many men on the waterfront do you think came from the logging camps? What proportion? Do you have any way of guessing on that? Was it a third?

[00:18:23] **JOE:** Oh, heavens no.

[00:18:24] **HOWARD:** It wasn't that much.

[00:18:25] **JOE:** No, heavens no. Maybe an insignificant amount.

[00:18:33] **HOWARD:** A small number.

[00:18:35] **JOE:** A small number.

[00:18:37] **HOWARD:** Because I'm trying to trace the impact of the Wobblies. It sounds, to you, like there wasn't much of an impact, at least by 1928 from the Wobblies.

[00:18:45] **JOE:** There wasn't.

[00:18:45] **HOWARD:** No?

[00:18:46] **JOE:** In the first place, as long as the employers had the hiring hall, if they ever had the slightest hunch that there was a Wobbly, he would never get on the job.

[00:18:57] **HOWARD:** See, what I heard, after the '22 strike, the Wobblies were some of the most experienced men on the waterfront. The employers may have known them as Wobblies, but they also needed experienced and good workers. So a lot of them were rehired after the '22 strike. [tapping sound] Many of them stayed on through the twenties and into the thirties. Does that seem possible?

[00:19:16] **JOE:** That is possible, but there were probably the Wobblies and the experienced men that probably leaned more toward the employers than the radicalism. There was absolutely no surprise strikebreaking activities or interference before '34. You just had to be a good man, or you didn't work. That's all there is to it, especially when work got scarce. All that stuff, you know, that they'll tell you—that there was Reds and communism, all this.

During the strike, there came three men. We were in the card room, in the old [inaudible] sitting there playing cards. We used to play poker and pinochle. A fellow came in—I didn't like his looks. He didn't talk like a western American. He talked like some goddamn—I don't know where he came from. He wanted to know whether we would sign up for a—well it was a communistic party. Four or five fellows—of course, most of them are dead by now—when the war came, the Coast Guard wouldn't give them the Coast Guard pass. Somebody said, "Why didn't they appeal their Coast Guard pass?" I told one of them. I said, "Clarence, do you remember that time we were playing cards. And you signed that card?" Then it dawned on him. They signed the card to join the communistic party [sic], and they didn't even know it. At that time, communism seemed, it was in style, why not? They would talk to people, but as far as having an influence on the waterfront—

[00:21:15] **HOWARD:** No?

[00:21:16] **JOE:** The same thing! They called Harry Bridges a communist and some of his helpers. But you know what really made Harry Bridges—what convinced most of the longshoremen why Harry Bridges was a good leader? He was a rank-and-file man. He wouldn't do anything that wasn't agreed by the majority of the rank-and-file. He did that in all his meetings and all the negotiations and every place else. I've been to many meetings where he presided many times. He says, "Let the rank-and-file decide."

[00:22:02] **HOWARD:** Now, I've talked to people who were opponents of Bridges, and they said that he used to ride roughshod in meetings. He would ram stuff down people's throats. He have his supporters in the audience stand up at the right times and cheer. No?

[00:22:15] **JOE:** No, no, no. Elsie—she’s been to many meetings when Harry Bridges was there. She didn’t know who Harry Bridges was, but says, “You know what I respect Harry for? He let the people talk, and then finally he gets up and says, ‘Now, look.’ ”

[00:22:30] **ELSIE:** Very, very quiet. Very low voice.

[00:22:34] **JOE:** There is no hard tone or hard voice with Harry. In fact, most times, you can’t even hear him! After all conversations, all the arguments are settled, then he says, “Now, look. Why don’t we decide on what we want, all of us? Then the majority rules.” That’s the way he handled it. He doesn’t come to the podium and say, “Let’s do this and that.”

We had a man—he come over here from the East Coast. We had a meeting one time in the labor temple. Joe Ryan. He started to give us orders, and he’s going to go and meet the employers and this and that. You know what they did? They took him by the sleeve and said, “You get the hell out of this hall and never show up again.”

[00:23:19] **HOWARD:** Was that in the ‘34 strike?

[00:23:21] **JOE:** Yeah, that was during the ‘34 strike. They didn’t throw him out, but they escorted him out of the hall and said, “Now, you stay clear. Get out of here.” And he did.

[00:23:31] **ELSIE:** Tell him who this Ryan is.

[00:23:33] **HOWARD:** Oh, I know Joe Ryan.

[00:23:35] **JOE:** He was the president of the ILA.

[00:23:37] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:23:38] **JOE:** But he didn’t come alone. He had his henchmen with him. If you saw those guys, Al Capone hats and all that stuff, that’s all you needed. This Wagner, Senator Wagner, when he came over here—naturally, he wanted to see Terminal Four because we told him. He says, “I want to see that.” So there was a car arranged from the city, and there was Senator Wagner and Matt Meehan—he was the leader then from our bunch—and there were two other men. I saw the car as it proceeded down to Terminal Four. The shot was fired to the car, on the back, but nobody got hit. It was a miracle that nobody in there—Meehan and the Senator Wagner were sitting in the back seat. The car was just from the corner like this; the bullet went right through it. Well, anyway—

[00:24:47] **HOWARD:** It was Meehan? Matt Meehan was in the car?

[00:24:51] **JOE:** Matt Meehan was the only man from our group, the longshoremen, that was in the car. There was Senator Wagner, Matt Meehan, and—

[00:25:02] **HOWARD:** Craycraft? Was he one—

[00:25:03] **JOE:** No.

[00:25:04] **ELSIE:** Oh, no.

[00:25:04] **JOE:** No, Rosco Craycraft wasn’t in there. Hell, I know him; we’re good friends.

[00:25:08] **HOWARD:** I'm going out see him later in the week.

[00:25:10] **JOE:** Now, he can give you some information.

[00:25:11] **ELSIE:** Yes! We just saw him the other day—

[00:25:13] **JOE:** Well, anyway, they stayed in there, oh, maybe an hour, a little longer, in Terminal Four, and then he come back. They were going to the hall. At that time we had the hall at Ninth and Everett. I was in the hall, and we all wanted to hear what Senator Wagner had to say. We helped him to get on the table. When he got on the table, he was pretty shaky. He was an older man with gray hair. He says, "Man, what I saw and what I witnessed—I'm going to the President of the United States. When I tell him, I can assure you it wouldn't hurt you at all. He'll give you assistance." Then he talked—he didn't say very much about the shooting. By that time, we knew it, everybody knew that the car was shot at. I even saw where the bullet went in because you could see the indentation. Anyway—

[00:26:27] **HOWARD:** Who shot at him? Did they ever find out who did that?

[00:26:30] **JOE:** No.

[00:26:30] **HOWARD:** Just some anti-union character, right?

[00:26:33] **JOE:** It was not from the union side.

[00:26:35] **HOWARD:** No.

[00:26:36] **JOE:** See, there was guards all around the wire fence. You couldn't get in or out. But, after Wagner got back, and he even went and talked to [U.S.] President Roosevelt, and Congress or whoever it was. Finally the labor relations board [National Labor Relations Board] was created, and it was toward the end of the strike. Because then when the governor visited, they had to open the waterfront up, but not by force, as they wanted to, but through negotiations. The Labor Relations Act was taken effect, and Senator [Wayne] Morse, who was a Republican at that time, he was arbitrator. He saw the injustices. Finally we got the hiring hall that was a mutual hiring hall, where the employers and the employees contributed to the hall, the upkeep of it. But the dispatching came through the longshoremen; it was our own hall. Also, there was a record of registration. All men had to be registered, and they were open to the employers. There was a labor relations board that oversaw the recordings and the registration. They were entitled to the work. That's when the last gang system was established. I got the number six—I'm going to get that book—

[00:28:23] **HOWARD:** You're number six?

[00:28:24] **JOE:** I'm number six.

[BREAK IN THE RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

[00:28:26] **HOWARD:** Keep talking! I want to hear what you have to say. [laugh]

[00:28:31] **ELSIE:** Here's what he should tell you about that he forgot to mention.

[00:28:36] **HOWARD:** Tell me what it was like before the '34 strike on the waterfront.

[00:28:42] **JOE:** Firstly, it was hard work, all manual labor. The difficulty was—the different gangs and the stevedoring companies, they had their own men, and they worked the certain ships. When that ship came in,

whether it was 8, 10, or 24 hours work, they kept the same men on the job. I worked at that time in the Luckenbach gangs. Sometimes it happened that we had a tall ship, was probably 8 or 9 hours work. Then, early in the morning, the East Coast ship came in. We had to go right from one ship onto the other. And it was murder. Honest to god, sometimes you got off of work, you could barely crawl. Now why did they? See, the supervisors and the bosses, they could stand it. But the guy down in the hole—he just worked his legs off. But on the other side, after you got through with a ship, then maybe you wouldn't get anything 'till the next Luckenbach ship came in. So you had to work to make a living. That's what I'm saying, it's an evolutionary process. One thing followed the other. But after we got the hiring hall, through the Labor Relations Act, then there was a rotation. And you had turnings. The man got his earnings, and the gang had its earnings. The lowest gang went out. the lowest man went out. [scrapping sound] We had—there was just no comparison.

[00:30:16] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question. Do you remember any attempts to organize another union during the twenties when you came on the waterfront?

[00:30:23] **JOE:** During the twenties?

[00:30:25] **HOWARD:** Because a guy named [Conrad] Negstad—is that a name that sounds familiar to you? He said he tried to organize a union in '27 or '28, I think, and got like 700 supporters and then it just sort of fell apart.

[BEGINNING OF PART]

[00:30:43] **JOE:** —initiated. There was no attempt to make any kind of union, not that I know of.

[00:30:51] **HOWARD:** What was the union like in those days?

[00:30:54] **JOE:** Secretive.

[00:30:55] **HOWARD:** It was?

[00:30:57] **JOE:** You couldn't wear a button or be proud of it, hell no. But, the idea was, we have to have a union because the employment was falling off. The employment was getting tougher. There were injustices. As soon as work nationwide fell off, and friends got in—so we have to have some kind of an organization to supervise us. So we knew we had to.

[00:31:30] **HOWARD:** Did the union enter in collective bargaining relations with the employers? Doesn't sound like it, then, if it's a secret organization?

[00:31:38] **JOE:** No, not at that time.

[00:31:39] **ELSIE:** Not then.

[00:31:40] **HOWARD:** What function did it serve then, if it was secretive?

[00:31:42] **JOE:** After we—well, the secret was to get eventually something started.

[00:31:51] **HOWARD:** So sort of an underground union.

[00:31:53] **JOE:** Well, they had a union on the East Coast—

[00:31:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:31:57] **JOE:** —so we wanted something similar but we didn't have a connection with the East Coast.

[00:32:03] **HOWARD:** Did you pay dues to the union? In '28, when you came on the waterfront?

[00:32:12] **JOE:** Yeah, I believe I paid initiation fee.

[00:32:14] **HOWARD:** Now, this is the ILA, is that correct?

[00:32:16] **JOE:** No, no, oh, ILA, yes, we were ILA until '37.

[00:32:21] **HOWARD:** Yeah. See, the thing is, in San Francisco [California] and Los Angeles, the guys told me that the union was basically a company union. [scraping sound] Was it different—

[00:32:31] **JOE:** It was more or less a company union.

[00:32:33] **HOWARD:** It was.

[00:32:34] **JOE:** Oh yes. The companies, they had their hiring men, two men, [?Jacque?] and [?Fritzy?], who was a German. And the little hall, they were—they were strictly employer men. They had their orders, whatever they were, and they weren't bad. They were reasonable. If a man produced his work, and if the gang leader was satisfied with him, and there was no complaints from up above, he didn't have any trouble. But there were fellows who just simply couldn't hold a job. There were some tough guys, young kids and stuff like this, they wouldn't stand for it. I was at that time 34, 35 years old. Or even older. And I was married and I had to hold down a job. I couldn't go down there rough necking around like some of the younger guys did. [scraping sound] Because I had to stay at home. Maybe you've heard of Howard Bodine?

[00:33:45] **HOWARD:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:46] **JOE:** Howard, he was on the rail. He was just a young kid. His father worked on the rail. Howard, he couldn't hold down a job, but he had a good head on him. We got acquainted, we got to be good friends. We were good friends until he died.

[00:34:08] **HOWARD:** I heard he was quite a gambler among other things.

[00:34:10] **ELSIE:** He was very intelligent.

[00:34:13] **HOWARD:** Was he?

[00:34:13] **JOE:** A damn good poker player.

[00:34:14] **ELSIE:** Very intelligent man.

[00:34:17] **HOWARD:** That's what I heard!

[00:34:20] **JOE:** He wasn't only a very good gambler. He was a man with foresight. That bald head of his was full of ideas. I'll tell you another thing about Howard Bodine. He came into Portland one time, and I was in the hall, I don't know, waiting for a job. Sometimes we had orders to go down to the hall, but we didn't know what time the ship come in. Now there's another thing like I was just talking about—you never knew when you went to work. But you knew the ship coming was delayed. It was foggy or wind outside; the ship was delayed. You just have to stay there and wait till it got in. then work until it was finished. And that was a tough time.

Well, anyway, one of the instances, Howard Bodine, he came in. He was in San Francisco at that time. I don't know just what job he had, whether it was coast committeeman or what he was. He says, "Joe, are you doing anything?" I said, "No." He says, "Come on, let's go for a ride." We went down on the west side to Terminal Four. He said, "What do you think of a pension?" [scraping sound] I said, "What? What is this?" "Do you think we could get a pension?"

[00:35:32] **ELSIE:** Aren't you skipping quite a few years?

[00:35:36] **HOWARD:** [laughing] This is after the war, right?

[00:35:38] **JOE:** How Howard knew—I do like to think sometimes I'll see a little ahead of the game. I said, "Howard, I don't know what you're talking about." He said, "Look, things are going to change. We're going to have mechanization. Believe me, they're working on it. They're going to build ships to fit the occasion and the man that can do it. But we're going to lose membership." "Howard, I don't know what you mean. How is it possible?" "Well, that's what I wanted to talk about."

What he foresaw at that time, it was fantastic! He says, "We're going to lose probably half of our membership to mechanization."

[00:36:27] **HOWARD:** When was he telling you this? Do you remember the year?

[00:36:30] **ELSIE:** I think it had to be after '44.

[00:36:33] **JOE:** Oh, yeah, it was just shortly after the war.

[00:36:37] **HOWARD:** Because the union got pensions in the early fifties, right?

[00:36:39] **ELSIE:** He goes back and forth in his time element, it's difficult to follow it.

[00:36:45] **JOE:** Pension negotiations comes, I think, after the '48 strike.

[00:36:48] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think so.

[00:36:50] **JOE:** But that's the first time that Howard told me what they were planning on doing. [scraping sound] Sure enough, then, first they made the pallets [inaudible] and then they had the lift to pick it up and carry it back and so forth.

Then later on there were more consolidators. But, when that started, then the Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] injected themselves. Because, when the pallets were built, directly in the factory or cannery or where ever it was, the Teamsters had to get them in a truck, to the dock, in their forklifts; and they wanted bring them right to the ships. That didn't work.

Another thing, the lumber—well, we're skipping too many things.

[00:37:41] **HOWARD:** Yeah, let's go back to the '34 strike, ok?

[00:37:44] **JOE:** Ok!

[00:37:44] **HOWARD:** I'm going to follow it up systematically as much as possible. I know it's easy to get sidetracked.

[00:37:48] **JOE:** '34 strike led to a maritime organization.

[00:37:51] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about the '34 strike itself. Tell me more about where the scabs were housed. There was a ship, wasn't there, that they were housed on in the '34 strike?

[00:38:00] **JOE:** Yeah, the Benson.

[00:38:01] **HOWARD:** The Benson.

[00:38:02] **JOE:** Yeah, it was a paper boat.

[00:38:03] **HOWARD:** And the men once tried to storm it? Is that correct? The strikers once tried to get onto the ship and force the scabs out? I remember reading about some incident—no?

[00:38:14] **JOE:** No, not in the '34, no. What we did, we watched when they relieved—see, they have to get off that boat. So they took a motor launch, or some boat, and they landed them someplace in the brush. Then it was up to them. But, the funny thing, the cops told us where they were going to load them. So we waited for them.

[00:38:34] **HOWARD:** What was the role of the police in the strike here? Were they somewhat sympathetic, or what?

[00:38:39] **JOE:** All the police force, the regular men, they were very sympathetic. But the—

[00:38:47] **HOWARD:** Why?

[00:38:50] **JOE:** Well, they saw the injustice. They saw the way the money was handled and paid off. But the sheriff's department—they were tough. They were the fellows that raised hell. But some of the older police force—

[00:39:11] **HOWARD:** Were they maybe ex-longshoremen, some of them? Is that possible why they—I heard that some of them were former longshoremen, and that 12 policemen were actually disciplined by the chief of police or the mayor because they were friendly to the strikers. Do you remember that?

[00:39:25] **JOE:** That's possible.

[00:39:26] **HOWARD:** Who was it, Mayor [George] Baker at that time? Is that who it was? No, no, it was somebody later.

[00:39:37] **JOE:** Carson, Mayor [Joseph K.] Carson.

[00:39:37] **HOWARD:** Yeah. He disciplined 12 officers because they sided with the—

[00:39:43] **JOE:** See, [?Jerry?] 's father, he was on the police force.

[00:39:46] **ELSIE:** May I butt in?

[00:39:48] **HOWARD:** Sure.

[00:39:50] **ELSIE:** I happen to know, at that time, that there were men hired to break the strike and hired as extra policemen.

[00:40:04] **HOWARD:** Special security forces, right?

[00:40:05] **ELSIE:** Yes. Right.

[00:40:07] **JOE:** That's what I got 90 days for.

[00:40:09] **HOWARD:** Did you really?

[00:40:10] **ELSIE:** There were many of those that were hired. Even on the river. The boats on the river, they were extra people which were hired purposefully to break the strike. The reason I know that is because they were friends of mine. At that time.

[00:40:33] **HOWARD:** Now, what do you mean about "hired to break the strike"? What did that mean?

[00:40:36] **ELSIE:** Well, they were scabs!

[00:40:40] **HOWARD:** They were scabs.

[00:40:41] **ELSIE:** Sure.

[00:40:42] **JOE:** The way it happened, you know there was the tugboatsmen, barge attendants—they would be hired and taken as help on the barge or tugboat, and then, when they get past the picket line, or get down there, they would just unload and go to work on the job. That's the way they got through the back pipeline, the way they got on the waterfront.

[00:41:08] **HOWARD:** Where did they recruit the scabs from? Do you remember? What kind of people were the scabs in those days?

[00:41:16] **JOE:** [laughing]

[00:41:17] **ELSIE:** Some of them are our friends!

[00:41:20] **HOWARD:** Are they really?

[00:41:21] **ELSIE:** Nowadays—

[00:41:21] **HOWARD:** That scabbed in '34?

[00:41:26] **JOE:** [inaudible] .

[00:41:26] **ELSIE:** —there's so many things that have changed. They just happened to be on the other side of the fence, like I was. We didn't know both sides of the story. That's the whole point. Now I've learned more. I've learned about the unfairness.

[00:41:44] **HOWARD:** What was your position on the strike? You were against the strike, I take it.

[00:41:48] **ELSIE:** I wasn't even there! He and I were not married.

[00:41:52] **HOWARD:** But weren't you living in Portland at that time?

[00:41:54] **ELSIE:** Oh, sure!

[00:41:55] **JOE:** She was a union musician.

[00:41:57] **ELSIE:** I was a musician.

[00:42:02] **HOWARD:** So you were in a union, but you didn't support the strikers. Just on a personal level, I was just wondering.

[00:42:09] **ELSIE:** No, not that. I was on the other side of the fence. I was not—well, let's put it this way. I belong to the musicians' union. I supported Harry Bridges. I even contributed money to keep Harry Bridges from being deported. As a member of the musicians' union, that's what we did. That was the first that I knew about Harry Bridges. Now, in later years, I've become acquainted with him.

When I became acquainted with Joe, we started to go together in '44. At that time, I was working in Willamette Iron and Steel [Works, or WISCO] in the engineering department. By the way, we had union people come up there and try to sign up with the unions. Some of them were my friends, too, but they couldn't do it. You know why? Willamette Iron and Steel canned anybody that tried to belong to a union. Oh you bet they did.

[00:43:30] **HOWARD:** Even during the war like that?

[00:43:32] **ELSIE:** Sure!

[00:43:33] **JOE:** Oh heavens yes.

The reason the outside world wasn't familiar with the strike, because the press, like The Oregonian or The Oregon Journal, they were opposed to it. They would take their orders from City Hall. The Evening Telegram at that time would probably publish something, but not much.

[00:43:54] **HOWARD:** Was the Oregon Labor Press being published at that time?

[00:43:57] **JOE:** Not to my knowledge.

[00:43:59] **HOWARD:** Probably not.

[00:44:02] **JOE:** I was a delegate when we first organized. I was delegate to the Central Labor Council which was in the Labor Temple.

[00:44:10] **HOWARD:** In what, '33? '34?

[00:44:13] **JOE:** It was in maybe '32, '33. It was before the '34 strike. Most of the time we had the meetings in the evening. They had an old ring down there in the Labor Temple, way down below. They had wrestling matches and so forth. We would sit there up high. The secretary, she was a waitress. By that time, the AF of L [American Federation of Labor] consisted mostly of craft unions.

[00:44:47] **HOWARD:** Now, you were representing the ILA?

[00:44:49] **JOE:** ILA, yes.

[00:44:50] **HOWARD:** When was it organized, then? I guess it was continuous throughout that period in Portland, right? See, my impression was that there really wasn't much of a union until about '33 or '34. But you're saying—

[00:45:05] **JOE:** That's correct. But we already had a membership, but it was secretly.

[00:45:10] **HOWARD:** And you were representing this membership?

[00:45:13] **JOE:** I was delegate to go to the council.

[00:45:17] **HOWARD:** This was around 1932, you think?

[00:45:19] **JOE:** Something around there.

[00:45:22] **ELSIE:** May I ask a question? On the East Coast, they were more organized?

[00:45:28] **JOE:** Oh, yeah, definitely.

[00:45:29] **ELSIE:** Well, that was the point. But Portland was a little bit slow in coming along in union ideas.

[00:45:36] **JOE:** The point I was disappointed with the Labor Temple—there was a big fat waitress. She was a secretary. She was reading all the communications and all the news. Honest to god, she had a voice like a mouse. You couldn't hear it. We were sitting up there, maybe 10 or 15 rows up high. Then I had to go back the next meeting and make a report. Oh that was an agony! I even made a motion one time—of course, there was no electricity at the time. There was no microphones. A person with a weak voice—you couldn't hear them. It was impossible. How are you going to make a report the next day? Well, I was gonna quit that job. "No, you stick to it." Once you got a job, you know, you have to hang on to it.

[00:46:23] **HOWARD:** Were you elected to this position, or was it sort of like you were an active member of the union, or . . . ?

[00:46:29] **JOE:** I was active right since from the beginning. I always got my nose into it.

[00:46:33] **HOWARD:** Why? Why were you so active?

[00:46:35] **ELSIE:** He's a good talker.

[00:46:37] **HOWARD:** Are you?

[00:46:38] **JOE:** Well, I don't know.

[00:46:39] **ELSIE:** He can get up in front of 400 or 500 people and talk and talk on with no notes.

[00:46:48] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:46:49] **ELSIE:** He's been doing it all the years we've been married. Of course, now he forgets because he old. But he's a good talker.

[00:46:56] **JOE:** I hardly ever take notes.

See, now, dear god we are skipping so much time, but. . . [laughing] She liked me afterwards! I complained about the voice. . . [laughing]

[00:47:14] **HOWARD:** We don't have to put this on the tape. [laughing] Romance entered into this!

[00:47:20] **JOE:** But that's the way things go. You know, you don't get the full information. You don't get the access to it. At that time, the longshoremen—they were no tradesmen anyway. What were they? We were not recognized as a reliable citizen of any kind.

[00:47:34] **HOWARD:** How many guys were in the secret union at that time? About? Of those who were working on the waterfront, say around 1932?

[00:47:40] **JOE:** '32?

[00:47:42] **HOWARD:** Just approximately. A quarter of them, maybe?

[00:47:46] **JOE:** Oh, in the vicinity, there were maybe 150.

[00:47:49] **HOWARD:** Out of how many on the waterfront?

[00:47:52] **JOE:** Well, then when we got into '34, we got really registered and all, we had about 1100-1200.

[00:48:01] **HOWARD:** So about 150 in 1932?

[00:48:07] **JOE:** I would say about 100 or 150 men.

[00:48:07] **HOWARD:** And that might have been out of maybe 1000 workers at that time?

[00:48:10] **JOE:** Something like that.

[00:48:12] **HOWARD:** Ok, so the union, the company union, that you were—see, I don't understand that. Why were you involved in the company union, then? If it was a company union, what was your role? Or was it a company union?

[00:48:25] **JOE:** Well, it was a union—the union was ILA. we were trying to inject ourselves to get a union, to get the waterfront organized. That's why we had to stay secret. But the hiring hall was by the employers.

[00:48:43] **HOWARD:** Now, was there a union sort of associated with the hiring hall? Was that a blue book union?

[00:48:47] **JOE:** No, heaven's know. If they knew you would show up with a book, you wouldn't even get hired.

[00:48:52] **ELSIE:** A hiring hall is what they had to fight for.

[00:48:54] **JOE:** That's what the '34 strike was, to get the hiring hall.

[00:48:57] **HOWARD:** Yeah, well, there was a fink hall before '34, wasn't there? So-called fink hall. That was the employer's hall.

[00:49:03] **JOE:** That was the employer's hall. They selected their own men, their own gangs, and so forth. Like I tried to tell you. In some places, they called it a shape-up. We didn't have that. The gang leader selected the gang. He hired his friends or whoever they were. That's the way it was handled.

[00:49:23] **HOWARD:** It was gang hiring rather than a shape-up. And you had the ILA there, which was a secret organization and pretty much of a company union as far as—

[00:49:33] **JOE:** No, no.

[00:49:34] **HOWARD:** No?

[00:49:35] **JOE:** No, the ILA had nothing to do with the shape-up. Nothing at all. After we got a union established, after the '34, through the Labor Relations Act, then we got the hiring hall.

[00:49:46] **HOWARD:** Ok. Yeah.

[00:49:46] **JOE:** Then, the hiring hall was a mutual hall. It was the employees', and then it was an entirely new deal. That lasted until '37. The reason it broke up was—see, there was all the maritime unions. It was the first to have maritime groups be united on it. But the sailors in the first place—I think Joe Curran from the East Coast and Harry Lundeberg from the West Coast didn't see eye to eye because Harry Lundeberg had the steam schooners. Joe Curran, he had the East Coast. Well, the people who had the money were the firemen [Marine Firemen's Union]. The secretary of the firemen—I can't think of the name now—he was a tough egg. Well, I agreed with him, but boy he was tight with his money. He wouldn't support us. We didn't have any money; we couldn't buy any radio announcement. We couldn't get to the press. We was out of luck.

I remember we had a meeting. It was Harry Bridges; he was sitting on this side of a long table. Harry Lundeberg came along this side. The fireman was sitting there someplace. The question was how we could a speaker on the radio that's saying to strike. Well, we didn't have any money, so I think Harry Bridges asked the fireman if he would extend us some money or something so we could at least hire and get somebody up there. We had a pretty good man—he was a newspaper man, and he was a good talker. But Harry Lundeberg, he disagreed with it. When those two Harrys got into an argument, Harry Lundeberg says, "You took my work away from me!" Harry says, "You've got no business in longshoring!" So the meeting broke up.

That was just about the end of the maritime strike and the maritime unions. On top of it, John L. Lewis came in, and he organized the industrial workers. Didn't have to be craftspeople, could be anybody. As long as you work in industry, he was entitled to be a union man. So finally we joined the CIO and got—

[00:52:15] **HOWARD:** Before we get there, I wanted to ask you a few more questions about '34. We've talked about the role of the police, how some of the police sided with the strikers during '34.

[00:52:25] **JOE:** Not openly, but secretly.

[00:52:26] **HOWARD:** Yeah, secretly. Generally, the public felt how about the strike? You think most of them were opposed to the strikers or did it vary?

[00:52:34] **ELSIE:** I can tell you—they were opposed. Portland is a very, very anti-union town.

[00:52:43] **HOWARD:** Why do you think that's so?

[00:52:44] **ELSIE:** And so is The Oregonian.

[00:52:47] **HOWARD:** Seattle [Washington] is a very pro-union town. And they're 200 miles away.

[00:52:51] **ELSIE:** It's better.

[00:52:52] **JOE:** That is all true. You said it—if we didn't get the support from the public, I don't believe we could have made it. It was tough, I admit, because the people listening to the press and the radio—they were anti-the strikers. They were blaming the strikers for the tough times that existed. But we had to go out to the

farms, out to the people, actually soliciting food. I used my car many times, and I got eggs, bacon, ham, what-have-you, and flour. We got all the support we wanted.

[00:53:31] **HOWARD:** From farmers mostly, huh?

[00:53:33] **JOE:** Farming people out of town. The people who really were thinking people. They knew what the score was. Even the little stores down on [?Albano?] , around the waterfront, helped us all they possibly could. But they couldn't make any donations openly—they had to do it secretly.

[00:53:51] **ELSIE:** That's where the secrecy comes in because the general public was against you.

[00:53:58] **JOE:** Because the press had educated them to such an extent.

[00:54:00] **ELSIE:** That's right.

[00:54:01] **HOWARD:** Ok, so you're saying the general public was probably opposed, but there were a few thinking individuals who offered donations on the side.

[00:54:08] **ELSIE:** Right. And may I say, I think it's still that way.

[00:54:13] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think you're probably right. [Elsie laughs]

Do you know what percentage of the working class in this country's organized into unions? I bet you'd never guess.

[00:54:19] **ELSIE:** Sorry, it's small and it's getting less.

[00:54:22] **HOWARD:** 20 percent. One out of five. It's incredible.

[00:54:26] **ELSIE:** It's getting worse all the time.

[00:54:27] **HOWARD:** It is.

[00:54:28] **JOE:** Well, what do you expect? They threw the borders open and said, "Come on in!"

[00:54:32] **HOWARD:** But, it was that way before the border situation happened, I'll tell you. It's been going downhill since the Second World War.

[00:54:38] **JOE:** Do you know that Portland has so many Asiatic people—it'll astound you when you see them.

[00:54:43] **HOWARD:** We got a lot more in L.A. That isn't the problem, though.

[00:54:46] **JOE:** You've got Mexicans down there, but we have Asiatics.

[00:54:48] **ELSIE:** You're getting off the subject.

[00:54:49] **HOWARD:** Ok, yeah.

[00:54:52] **JOE:** [laughing]

[00:54:52] **HOWARD:** So, I just want to get a sense—generally the public in Portland was opposed to the strike because of the role that the paper played.

[00:54:58] **JOE:** Definitely.

[00:54:59] **HOWARD:** Yet there were a few individuals, progressives or whatever, who saw and offered contributions.

[00:55:04] **JOE:** A good percentage of it.

[00:55:06] **HOWARD:** Really?

[00:55:06] **JOE:** Oh yeah.

[00:55:07] **HOWARD:** How much food were you guys able to solicit this way and donations?

[00:55:12] **JOE:** We kept a commissary at the Labor Temple. Twice a week, we could get assistance from it. Food and so forth.

[00:55:20] **HOWARD:** All the strikers could?

[00:55:21] **JOE:** Yeah.

[00:55:22] **HOWARD:** So you were able to support a thousand strikers and their families throughout the strike on the basis of donations?

[00:55:28] **JOE:** Well, we got by somehow.

[00:55:29] **HOWARD:** That's pretty good if you ask me.

[00:55:32] **ELSIE:** May I interrupt? Now, Joe said that he used to go—he was appointed by a committee—he used to go during the strike to the water company, to the gas, to the electric—

[00:55:51] **JOE:** But that wasn't in the '34 strike—

[00:55:53] **ELSIE:** —and get them to turn the juice on for the people that couldn't pay for it. Well, when was that? '36? '37 strike. Well, anyway, you mix up your dates so much, I have no way of knowing. But I know that you're a good talker.

[00:56:22] **JOE:** What she's talking about—'37 strike was in the wintertime.

[00:56:23] **HOWARD:** Ok. We're not there yet. We'll get there, believe me. I've got a lot to go.

How much violence was there in the '34 strike?

[00:56:34] **JOE:** Well, if you hadn't been on the inside, you didn't know any of it. Occasional here and there. There was occasionally a scab being beat up. On the waterfront itself—

[00:56:53] **HOWARD:** There was that one incident where you tried to get the scabs, I thought. There was somebody trying to get through a cyclone fence [chain-link fence] that had been built around it.

[00:57:02] **JOE:** Oh, you mean, when the train was trying to break through to get to Terminal Four—

[00:57:06] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think so.

[00:57:08] **JOE:** There were several instances. There was one instances when they were trying to get from the oil docks, and they were shooting those tear gas bombs, the. . .

[00:57:23] **HOWARD:** Tear gas grenades?

[00:57:24] **JOE:** Tear gas. But they didn't get very far with it because the railroaders, they wouldn't go through the picket line. So, what the police did, they put a flat car in front of the locomotive. The cops with shotguns to shoot the tear gas. When they threw the tear gas, with heavy gloves we just grabbed them and threw them right back at them. Then the locomotive engineer says, "Baloney, I'm not going to go through there and get my eyes all washed up." So they refused to go through the picket line.

[00:57:57] **HOWARD:** Maybe I didn't hear about this. It was a train, and it was trying to get into, what, Terminal Four?

[00:58:01] **JOE:** No, what I'm talking about is on Front Street in Linden. At Terminal Four, it was different.

[00:58:07] **HOWARD:** Tell me about the train thing. That sounds interesting with the tear gas. What happened there again?

[00:58:12] **JOE:** Well, when the locomotive engineer refused to go through, the cops finally came in, and they arrested us. Took us downtown. By the time they get us registered at the police station, well, we had cars outside. We went back in the cars, went back on the picket line. The cops come out there. One afternoon, they arrested us two or three times! [laughing]

[00:58:32] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:58:33] **JOE:** Yeah!

[00:58:34] **HOWARD:** So you guys set up a picket line, and the train was going to come through—

[00:58:37] **JOE:** When it was time to push the cars through the picket line, they had to clear the rails.

[00:58:43] **HOWARD:** And the engineers wouldn't do it? They refused to drive?

[00:58:46] **JOE:** They wouldn't do it so they had to shoot the teargas to get us off of there. But we threw the tear gas back at the engineers, and they still refused to go.

[00:58:54] **ELSIE:** That's why they wouldn't go through!

[00:58:56] **JOE:** Well, they had to have a reason.

[00:59:00] **ELSIE:** The way I understand you, it wasn't especially that they were sympathetic with your idea. Because the engineer didn't want to get his eyes hurt.

[00:59:13] **JOE:** The engineer had to show some reason why he didn't want to go through the picket line.

[00:59:17] **HOWARD:** Yeah, they always—

[00:59:18] **JOE:** He didn't want to jeopardize his own life. That was a legal fight. I remember one time even the attorney said, "Well, what did you do it for?" So that was a legal fight. But, at Terminal Four, it was different.

[00:59:30] **HOWARD:** What was the train trying to do, deliver material to the waterfront? Or take material away, or what?

[00:59:36] **JOE:** What the intention was we really don't know. But apparently they wanted to get a car with some material in there.

[00:59:41] **HOWARD:** Just maybe to provoke you guys.

[00:59:42] **JOE:** At Terminal Four, that was entirely different. There, they had to go from Saint John's. There was a kinda small forest, a group of trees. The track went through this group of trees over the hill to Terminal Four. That was open; it wasn't fenced in. The fence wasn't until they get up to Terminal Four. So we set a picket line up right by where the forest began. Again, they had told with the engineers and the railroad crews to get in there. So they came in with two flat cars. They had maybe seven or eight cops on there, sirens going, and their shotguns. This time they didn't shoot the gas; they shot actual bullets.

[01:00:45] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:00:47] **JOE:** Of course, luck it was, we had trees to hide behind. I think there was a man wounded, but I'm not quite sure. By the time, I got out of there—they told me afterwards that he got wounded, but it wasn't serious.

[01:01:08] **HOWARD:** What was the purpose of—

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[01:01:19] **JOE:** To ship more men, more material, and prepare for breaking the port. At the same time, they were hiring—they were advertising—in eastern Oregon. Cowpunchers [cowboys] and unemployed people. Hiring them by the hundreds to come into Portland to break the strike. They probably had a special date set all for this occasion.

[01:01:43] **HOWARD:** Do you remember approximately when this occurred, what month, what part of the month? It sounds very similar to what happened in San Francisco. The employers there gave an ultimatum. They said, "We're going to bring in some scabs if you guys haven't opened the port." They tried to push through a train; it didn't work.

[01:01:58] **JOE:** Definitely, yeah. That was the plan. It was shortly before Wagner came over here. When all this destruction started, a few days afterwards, Senator Wagner showed up, and he went to see what the score was. But, oh, hell, it was in the evening hour. All the flying squads, we were called down to the hall. The notice came that they're going to break through Front Street. Trucks were coming up, and they were going to open the ports. It was seven or eight o'clock in the evening in the summertime. Anyway, we organized to meet it on Front Street, just around where Ninth Street runs into Front Street—

[01:03:01] **ELSIE:** To meet who?

[01:03:03] **JOE:** To meet the scabs. We didn't know where they were coming from. We'd been told that there were trucks on their way coming to Portland to break the picket line. When we got just about in the vicinity of the dock, all of the sudden you could see by the Broadway Bridge—there was the trucks coming.

[01:03:20] **HOWARD:** How many strikers were there at this point assembled?

[01:03:23] **JOE:** How many strikers?

[01:03:24] **HOWARD:** Yeah. At that place, assembled to meet the scabs.

[01:03:28] **JOE:** Well, there were maybe three or four pickets. Some on the docks. The main force that came in to stop the strike breakers was maybe 20 or 30 men.

[01:03:42] **HOWARD:** Oh, not a whole lot, then.

[01:03:45] **JOE:** We were the core of the business.

[01:03:49] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:03:50] **JOE:** Yeah! Toby was in on the same bunch. But, anyways—

[01:03:55] **HOWARD:** You were the flying squad—is that what you called yourself?

[01:04:00] **ELSIE:** There's very few '34 men left.

[01:04:02] **JOE:** The flying squad—there were five of us. [?Bennie Fowler?] —he had a car, and I had a car. Then there was [?Big Nose Mack?] , [?Lance?] , [Fritz?] . . . [?Tom?] . . oh, jeez, now I don't want to mention the names.

[01:04:24] **HOWARD:** Ok, if you want to ever shut this off, just let me know, and I can turn it off.

[01:04:29] **JOE:** Oh I may use that, I shouldn't have mentioned—well, anyway, there were mostly five or six men to a flying squad. When we got up there and saw the trucks come in, it was up to us to stop them. They were coming fast; they were big heavy trucks. But, anyway, we got on the running boards—look, there were running boards at that time!—and we got the guys by the legs. Some of them by the hair. They didn't get very far, maybe two or three blocks, and finally they got railed off, instead of going to the docks they went to the railroad yard. As soon as they got across the railroad track, that was the end of it.

[01:05:06] **HOWARD:** So you stopped them from getting in. You were able to stop them from bringing the scabs in.

[01:05:13] **JOE:** That's how far they got.

[01:05:14] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:05:16] **JOE:** What happened afterwards I won't tell you. [laughing]

[01:05:19] **HOWARD:** [laughing] I can imagine!

[01:05:24] **JOE:** But what we were afraid of—it was right across from the Admiral [Lines] dock, the paper dock. There were three men, and they had a tripod machine gun set up there. Barbed wire and whatever. If they

see it, maybe they're going to start firing, but they didn't. I wouldn't have been surprised if we got fired on. If they had started firing at the strikers at that time, that would have been really something. We had plans of our own. If they started to shoot and really use hard bullets, we could do the same thing.

[01:05:57] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:05:59] **JOE:** We could have, but we didn't.

[01:06:00] **HOWARD:** Were you guys—let me put this—back on tape now. Ok.

[01:06:07] **JOE:** Lucky-wise, the city didn't start to shoot, and neither did we. Except that incident down there in the park. That was about the only shooting that I remember.

[01:06:24] **HOWARD:** How were you able to keep them out? You had 20 or 30 guys, and they're driving big trucks in, and you jump on the running boards of the trucks and force them not to go in. Is that right?

[01:06:34] **JOE:** You get a guy by the neck, and you try to throw him off! He isn't going to drive where he wants to. He's going to get confused.

[01:06:39] **HOWARD:** Ok, but it is interesting they didn't try and have police marching in or something like that, with guns.

[01:06:46] **JOE:** Oh, heavens no, no.

[01:06:48] **HOWARD:** Why wouldn't they have tried that? They probably would have been able to disperse 20 or 30 strikers, though, that way.

[01:06:54] **JOE:** I'll tell you how the Portland policemen were. They had a picket line up at the McCormick [Steamship Company] dock. That's right across from a union depot. They put a special policeman right by the gate. He was visible, and he a stick, you know, like policemen [did]. There was a temptation for some of the longshoremen, "I'm going to get that special cop if it's the last thing I do." You know, the first thing he disarmed them because he was a kind of comical guy. You couldn't hurt him because he was joking and he thought he was going to make fun. It was a hell of a place to make fun of the longshoremen. Sooner or later someone got on him and got hold of that stick. He went swimming.

[01:07:40] **HOWARD:** Is that right? [laughing]

[01:07:42] **JOE:** I'll never forget it! [laughing]

You know, there's some daring people. If you dare somebody, boy, I'm telling you, you take a big chance.

[01:07:51] **HOWARD:** That's one of those special policemen, right?

[01:07:55] **ELSIE:** That's one of the ones I was talking about. [laughs]

[01:07:57] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Now, the special policemen were not supposed to be scabs; they were just to protect law and order, supposedly, right?

[01:08:05] **ELSIE:** Well—

[01:08:05] **HOWARD:** And protect scabs.

[01:08:06] **ELSIE:** Supposedly.

[01:08:08] **JOE:** I'll tell you what they were. They were a nuisance to the regular police force. They were an eyesore to the longshoremen. So they were in the wrong place, no matter which way you take it. In that respect, [laughs] many times when there was a special police that maybe the cops would have been really pleased that something would happen [to the special police] , they let us know it.

[01:08:35] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:08:36] **JOE:** And, when they saw us coming, if you were a special, you were by yourself!

[01:08:42] **HOWARD:** Is that right? That's funny that they would do that. It's hard for me to imagine, the way the police are today in labor disputes. They consistently side with the employer.

Is it possible—someone suggested at one time that many of the police in Portland were ex-longshoremen. They may have been able to really sympathize with the issues.

[01:09:05] **JOE:** I don't know whether they were ex-longshoremen or not. I'll tell you what happened to me, and that might be on the tape. I was a mining man at the same time, and I knew something about powder and mining, driving tunnels and so forth. Work was slack during the early thirties. When I had three, four, five days off, I was a foreman in a mine in the Cascades [mountain range] . Most of the stockholders were policemen. Well, I run the mine for them. They knew who I was. I didn't know when they came up that there weren't dressed like police officers. Then, one time on the picket line, right on Oak Street, I was coming around the corner, and I run into a cop. He said, "What are you doing here, Joe?" He saw my white cap and my shirt. He says, "Are you a longshoreman?" By that time, he took his vest. He didn't want to advertise it, and I got out of the way. That was that. You see, there were connections. There were many people that lived and had friends and associates, longshoremen. Some of the longshoremen, they were good residential neighbors. And they lived in a good residential area.

[01:10:30] **ELSIE:** And they still are.

[01:10:32] **JOE:** By all means. Of course things speak for themselves. When the police officer knows that there are decent people down there, they get sympathetic. It was more than that—they knew how crooked the officials in the police were, the head of the police was. And from the City Hall. So you see, that worked both ways. But they had to protect their job, and they also shielded ours. People have a queer way to communicate.

[01:11:09] **HOWARD:** What do you mean you were in the leadership? What did that mean?

[01:11:14] **JOE:** I served on the executive board most of the time.

[01:11:17] **HOWARD:** At what point? What year are we talking about now?

[01:11:20] **JOE:** Right from the beginning.

[01:11:22] **HOWARD:** From '34 on, right?

[01:11:23] **JOE:** From '34, I was on the training committees and all that stuff. I worked with Rosco Craycraft. But I never wanted to be on top.

[01:11:35] **HOWARD:** Did you ever run for an elected office? I guess executive board is an elected office, isn't it?

[01:11:38] **JOE:** Oh, they are elected, yeah.

[01:11:39] **HOWARD:** Did you ever run for anything higher than that in the local or the International?

[01:11:45] **JOE:** I lost the interest. It was the time when the West Coast was supposed to send a man Back East to represent the West Coast longshoremen. There was Francis Murnane and me; we were running. He was a clever talker. I wasn't really interested, but the fellows that knew me said, "I nominate Joe Werner." "Ok," I said, "I accept." Then Murnane and I—but he was popular more amongst the, let's say, younger group and some of the latecomers. He won probably by a few votes—

[01:12:30] **ELSIE:** Well, he was an extremely good talker.

[01:12:35] **JOE:** He was a phony to begin with. Anyway, it might as well stay on the record. [laughing]

[01:12:39] **HOWARD:** Why was he a phony?

[01:12:42] **ELSIE:** Joe?

[01:12:46] **JOE:** Well. . .

[01:12:47] **HOWARD:** I can turn this off. I'm just curious what you—

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Um, ok, I was asking about your positions in the union. I want to ask you one other question on the '34 strike before we leave that. That was, do you remember any role that was played by so-called radical organizations? There was an organization called the Marine Workers Industrial Union [MWIU] , which was close to the Communist Party at that time. They were very active in San Francisco. They played a major role in the strike.

[01:13:10] **JOE:** I know they were active down there.

[01:13:12] **HOWARD:** What about in Portland? Any signs of them at all?

[01:13:17] **JOE:** I think once or twice I remember there was some fellows that came from the East Coast, and they took the feeling. But they didn't stay.

[01:13:28] **HOWARD:** That's it, huh?

[01:13:30] **JOE:** No, Portland was too conservative for that time. In fact, at that time, we even had opposition to Harry Bridges.

[01:13:41] **HOWARD:** Even?

[01:13:42] **JOE:** Strong opposition. There was a fellow here, a local man, he ran against Harry Bridges.

[01:13:48] **HOWARD:** That's right.

[01:13:50] **JOE:** He carried quite a bit of votes in the Northwest. But he didn't get any play down south [California] .

[01:13:55] **HOWARD:** What was the basis of running against Bridges? Was it that he objected to Bridges' politics? Even in '34?

[01:14:03] **JOE:** There were many people under the impression that Harry Bridges was communistically inclined. In fact, some even called him "commie."

[01:14:11] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:14:13] **JOE:** I remember a time when I was wondering if Harry could be, until I got personally acquainted with him. When I saw his actions, and how he was, and when I knew definitely that there were attempts made to buy him—to buy his vote or his persuasion—he just refused. He even got beat up for it.

[01:14:33] **HOWARD:** He did? I didn't know that. When was that all?

[01:14:38] **JOE:** Down in, Pedro [San Pedro, California] I think it was. Well, anyway—

[01:14:42] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question while we're on this. What do you think are Bridges' politics?

[01:14:46] **JOE:** Bridges?

[01:14:47] **HOWARD:** How would you characterize him politically, either of you? First you, and then Elsie.

[01:14:53] **JOE:** Well, I have to give you my own version of it. Harry Bridges went to sea when he was a young man. He came from a very religious family. When you go on your own, you learn people. You're not listening, you're watching, you're absorbing. You learn your way to make decisions, not only for the benefit of yourself, for the majority that you want to live with. I think that's the way Harry Bridges' mind was formed. I was similar to him because I left early and I was gone to sea among strangers, different languages, and one thing or another. When I knew Harry later on, one time I told him in Seattle in the meeting that he went just about the same way I did. Afterwards, he said, "Joe, I thank you for it."

When you're on your own as a young man, you look at life from an entirely different standpoint from the people who are raised at home, family life and all that. You kinda abstain from the popularity stuff. That's what Harry was. But he believed in the rank-and-file, and I think that comes from his Australian background. When I was in Australia one time, they wanted to work on a Sunday morning to get the ship out. They asked the shore boss if he could get the men to come down tomorrow morning to go to work. Just a few, maybe two or three hours work. He says, "You see that sun out there? That's the sun of Australia. As long as that sun is shining, longshoremen do not work." When they went on the job, they run things together. They don't go one this, and one that—they are very union-minded people. Harry was that way.

[01:16:53] **HOWARD:** Would you say that Bridges was a radical politically? At least, I'm saying before the mid-fifties.

[01:17:02] **JOE:** I don't say that he was radical, but he was more socialistically inclined.

[01:17:07] **HOWARD:** What's the difference in your mind? I'm just curious. Between a radical and a socialist.

[01:17:12] **ELSIE:** [laughing]

[01:17:12] **JOE:** A socialist, he wants to do it for the majority of the people, eliminating all the greed and all the double-crossing business. Now, the capitalistic system is profit, money, and what-have-you. Harry hates it. It isn't for the working man.

[01:17:31] **HOWARD:** Isn't that radical?

[01:17:33] **JOE:** No.

[01:17:35] **ELSIE:** It depends on how you look at it.

[01:17:37] **HOWARD:** Ok, what is your position on Bridges? What do you think he is politically, or was before 1960 at least?

[01:17:43] **ELSIE:** Well, the way I've heard about him, he was supposed to be a communist. He went through all of that trial and everything. To this day, he laughs and says he is the only person that can prove that he is not a communist. But—

[01:18:05] **HOWARD:** But he is radical, is he not?

[01:18:07] **ELSIE:** Well—

[01:18:08] **JOE:** What do you call radical?

[01:18:09] **HOWARD:** A guy who stands up and says the capitalist system is not in the interest of the majority of people. That what we need is a system that socializes the national economy, that looks out for the worker's interest. I don't use it as a disparaging word! I mean it's nothing that you have to be ashamed of, of being a radical in my book. Bridges fits it.

[01:18:28] **JOE:** If you call that radical, that's what Harry is.

[01:18:30] **HOWARD:** Yes! He's socialistically inclined. Being a socialist in America is a very radical position to take, isn't it? Seems to me.

[01:18:38] **ELSIE:** Well, then I must be a radical, too! Because I think—

[01:18:45] **JOE:** I admit, the capitalistic system is more productive. Now there are various capitalistics. You take the Japanese system. There is a provision made for the worker, and there is a distribution and assurance that a man is not going to go on the brinks or die from starvation. So many capitalistic systems are, "I need you today, I'll pay you for it; tomorrow you're on your own." There's where injustice comes in. Now, whether a man produces more by force or under pressure, that remains to be seen. I don't know. Are you a psychologist?

[01:19:23] **HOWARD:** Sociologist.

[01:19:25] **JOE:** [laughing] There might be something to it. People will do many things for a price.

[01:19:31] **HOWARD:** That's right.

[01:19:32] **JOE:** There is a difference now. What justice is, I don't know. Maybe I wouldn't go as far as Harry does. Harry'd stake his own life on the line. He says, "By god, the rank-and-file aren't going to do it. Why else?" I would probably—just like Elsie or you would—defend him and go, "Wait a minute, let's talk it over first!" [laughing]

[01:19:57] **HOWARD:** That's interesting. Every one of us uses these words in a different way. I'll ask guys, "Well, was Bridges a radical?" "Oh, no, no, no. But he was a socialist." In my mind, being a socialist is more radical than being a so-called radical!

[01:20:10] **JOE:** A socialist—it's a proud word.

[01:20:13] **HOWARD:** Yeah, it is.

[01:20:13] **JOE:** It encompasses many evils.

[01:20:16] **ELSIE:** I must be radical then because I feel in my heart that some of the industries in our United States should be socialized for the benefit of everyone.

[01:20:34] **HOWARD:** That is a radical position to take in America today. If you ask people in this country—you don't have to be ashamed of it! There's nothing wrong with it! All the good ideas start out being held by minorities, right? We all know that.

[01:20:47] **JOE:** That's the beautiful part, that we can express ourselves the way we feel.

[01:20:51] **HOWARD:** That's right.

[01:20:51] **JOE:** Now, you can see what I have said. What she says, that her business. What I mean, what I think, well, an article the other day on what really success is. And the answer is if you reach a time in your life that you can dispose of the time the way you wish and please. You're not creating any hardship to yourself or to anyone else—that is success.

[01:21:16] **HOWARD:** That seems like a reasonable idea.

[01:21:20] **JOE:** That means a hell of a lot. You have to have financial backing; you have to have comfort and health—a vision for health. Now that is success. Now, I don't know about socialism or whether it's capitalism, but that's success.

[01:21:36] **HOWARD:** That's interesting how different people view these terms.

[01:21:39] **ELSIE:** May I say something?

[01:21:40] **HOWARD:** Sure.

[01:21:41] **ELSIE:** I was born here in Portland. My folks were born here in this country. My bloodstream goes way back, Yankees and so on. But there are many things about capitalistic ideas that I do not like, and I'll tell you why. I do not like the idea of people feeling that money is their god.

[01:22:17] **HOWARD:** That's right.

[01:22:19] **ELSIE:** I even told that to one of our very dear friends the other day, who, by the way, is a wealthy person. But the way she talks, I couldn't help but say, "Money is your god."

[01:22:37] **HOWARD:** That's right.

[01:22:38] **ELSIE:** My own brother, I'm afraid, is that way. I love him dearly. I have just one brother, he lives in California. Money is his god, but he would be very agitated with me if he heard me say it.

[01:22:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's true.

[01:22:57] **JOE:** I like [inaudible] —now there's a man. He has a real capitalistic attitude.

[01:23:04] **ELSIE:** Yes, he is.

[01:23:05] **JOE:** Pure and simple, nothing else but. He's successful; he's a self-made man. I don't know how wealthy he is, but he's got plenty of money. [laughing]

[01:23:16] **ELSIE:** When those two get together, oh! I beg your—

[01:23:21] **HOWARD:** Where did you get your views? Did part of it come from your union experience, or did you have the views that you have now before you got into the union? It sounds to me like you're a little critical of the capitalist mainstream views.

[01:23:33] **ELSIE:** Well, in the same way that I am.

[01:23:36] **HOWARD:** In the same way that you are.

[01:23:36] **ELSIE:** But, on the other hand, he is a citizen that was born in another country. But he knows more about this country—he has had to learn more about it—than I ever learned in school!

[01:23:54] **HOWARD:** Sure. Did you bring some of your radical ideas over from Germany with you? Or did you learn them when you got over here?

[01:24:00] **JOE:** No, I was born in Germany. I left Germany shortly after World War I, after I served four years in the war over there. But I was away from Germany before the war. I was in South America. I done deep-sea diving. I was a young man. When I went home to visit, the war broke out. Then I was 18 years old, and I couldn't leave. I had to stay there. In 1918 on the twenty-eighth of November, I come home—one day after my birthday.

When I say what my people went through—by the way, my mother was an American-born citizen. She was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When I saw the misery that the people went through, what this war was all about—naturally the people fight for the government, for the country. This patriotic idea, everybody has it, no matter where you come from. You protect your home. But when you see and compare—which I had the opportunity to compare. I saw what other people were like. All that stuff that I'd read and been told about, it created doubt in the Weimar [?Republic?]; really, this is the way I saw it. By comparison, you have a good idea to learn. So I made up my mind to get out of Germany. That was not simple. In the first place, as a German citizen, you couldn't go any place in England, any place in European countries. So finally, by some hook and crook, I got to the Suez Canal, through the Red Sea, and I got down to Singapore and Sumatra [Indonesia]. There I stayed for three months. Then I got to Shanghai [China] and eventually Yokohama [Japan], but first to Kobe in Japan. I walked across Japan on foot!

[01:25:59] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:26:00] **JOE:** And I stayed there until the earthquake in '23. Well, I had a job but it doggone up and blew it. The hotel and everything where I worked. But I was lucky—there, again, it's evolution. I go by it. There was a ship in port that lost its crew. They must have gone downtown and, through the earthquake, they couldn't get back. There was a mate; he was looking for a crew to go on the ship. It was a Norwegian ship. I said, "Where's the ship going?" "To the United States." "Well, then, sign me up. I'm going." But I didn't have any clothes! All I had was a pair of slippers.

[01:26:43] **ELSIE:** There's that Japanese earthquake.

[01:26:46] **JOE:** All I had was a straw hat, a kimono, and underwear. I said, “That’s all I have. Everything is burned right there in that hotel.” “You don’t need it.” He says, “There’s four or five men. You can take their clothes and everything will be ok. But you’re a sailor?” “Hell yeah, I sailed for years.” So, well, I went on the ship, took off my straw hat and my kimono, and got a pair of boots, and there I was. I landed in Astoria about three or four weeks later. I’ve been here ever since.

[01:27:25] **HOWARD:** Ok. It is funny how things like that work out. One final question on the ‘34 strike. What kind of impact did it have on the men? Generally?

[01:27:41] **JOE:** You mean the workers?

[01:27:42] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Was it more than just a strike to them?

[01:27:45] **JOE:** It was.

[01:27:45] **HOWARD:** Was it symbolic of some larger thing?

[01:27:48] **ELSIE:** I think so.

[01:27:52] **JOE:** The ‘34 strike gave the men inspiration that there was a future, that there was something happening. The way it was before, it was just—nobody knew what he was going to do the next day. But after we got the hiring hall—that was really the main thing. You belonged there; you were registered. You had your name and your number there, and you were entitled to a share of the work that was available.

See, [?Senator Moseley?] was the arbitrator. He arbitrated and the rules that were set was later, and still is, the Labor Relations Act. By the way, [U.S. President Ronald] Reagan wants to eliminate that. That’s a very vital thing. From then on, everything changed. The United States changed. Everything changed.

[01:28:52] **ELSIE:** Explain about the work, how you said it was shared. How was it shared?

[01:29:01] **JOE:** Well, there was a—

[01:29:02] **HOWARD:** Before we get there, there’s one other question I want to ask you. There was some discussion about initiating a general strike in Portland, wasn’t there? In 1934? Though it never materialized. I read somewhere where the longshoremen went to the Labor Council, I think, and proposed a general strike. There was some discussion—

[01:29:24] **JOE:** There wasn’t very much during the time; everything was shut down. I think there was a Portland mention of a general strike, but it was toward the end. I think it started in San Francisco, where a general strike was declared. Before it spread over here, there was—I think by that time Roosevelt took hold of it, and they started the negotiations. But if it hadn’t come through the president, to the employers, that they had to sit across the table and negotiate, I don’t know how the strike would have ended. The pressure came from up above.

[01:30:04] **HOWARD:** Ok, now Elsie’s question about the sharing of work.

[01:30:07] **ELSIE:** I just wanted him to explain how they decided on sharing the work. You didn’t tell him yet!

[01:30:16] **JOE:** Well, it was—

[01:30:17] **ELSIE:** Rotating!

[01:30:18] **JOE:** The rotation work, what I mean is, the lower gang went out first. The low man in earnings, he got the first job.

[01:30:28] **ELSIE:** And then?

[01:30:32] **JOE:** Then, when he got through with the job, then he was probably higher, and he had to wait until low when he went up again. But it was the men that worked on the board—we had a plug board, and they plugged in by his earnings. There was, let's say, \$100, \$250 or whatever it was—

[01:30:47] **HOWARD:** That happened in '34, the low man out?

[01:30:50] **JOE:** Oh, yeah.

[01:30:51] **HOWARD:** I thought that came a little later on, like in '37 or so. In San Francisco it came later on. At first it was just routine dispatching.

[01:31:01] **JOE:** Yeah, I think it started later on.

[01:31:03] **HOWARD:** Yeah. I think so.

[01:31:06] **JOE:** See, after '34, there was the maritime division. There was all the unions that got together. The steam schooners and the sailors —

[END PART THREE/BEGIN PART FOUR]

[01:31:20] **HOWARD:** —symbolic meaning to the workers. You come back to the waterfront, and what's it like to go back to work?

[01:31:26] **JOE:** What it was like?

[01:31:26] **HOWARD:** Yeah. What was running through your head? Did you say, "We've won," or did you feel like, "Well, it's still up for arbitration. I don't know where we stand? Maybe we wasted all our time?" What was the men's feeling?

I know it's hard to go back 40 years and remember what you were thinking.

[01:31:44] **JOE:** That's what I'm trying to do right now.

[01:31:45] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Because up at that point, it looks still up in the air. All you've gotten was a promise to negotiate with no definite commitments on anything.

[01:31:58] **JOE:** The first thing we did, we got our dispatchers that were longshoremen.

[01:32:10] **HOWARD:** But that came in the award, didn't it? Wasn't that part of the arbitration award later on?

[01:32:15] **JOE:** Oh, yes. The award was that the supervision in the hall would be from the longshoreman himself, but they had to work under certain rules.

[01:32:27] **HOWARD:** Did the work change any when you came onto the waterfront? Were the employers less bossy?

[01:32:33] **JOE:** No.

[01:32:34] **HOWARD:** No?

[01:32:34] **JOE:** No, no. Before '34, I worked in a Luckenbach gang. But after '34, I changed. I went in the log gang because there was more money in it. At the time, they started to send scrap iron to Japan, and they loaded scrap in the bottom of the ship and then logs on top. If you got a job, heck, you were good for over \$100. Let's say it this way: I was an older hand; maybe I wasn't preferred stock or whatever it was. So I had a charge to pick the job. So I picked [?Harry Rhodes?] gang. By the way, I got a brand new car on that!

[01:33:26] **ELSIE:** [phone ringing] Oh dear.

[BREAK IN THE RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

[01:33:27] **HOWARD:** What it was like to come back to the waterfront in '34. You were telling me you got a different job, with a different group.

[01:33:32] **JOE:** I chose a different gang.

[01:33:36] **ELSIE:** But was it improved in any way?

[01:33:39] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's what I want to get at.

[01:33:43] **JOE:** The improvement was that we were not afraid to get canned. You could be more free, and the best thing that I remember was we set up gang stewards.

[01:33:58] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about something first. You said, "you could be more free." What did that mean?

[01:34:06] **JOE:** Freedom of expression. I don't mean that you could loaf on the job or anything. The production was just the same. But there wasn't the fear of losing the job for no reason at all. It was more secure—you were secure with your job.

[01:34:24] **HOWARD:** Can you think of any instances that you know of—maybe you were involved in—where an employer would give you a directive, and you'd say, "Wait a minute, that violates the contract," or, "We refuse to do that." In other words, like a quickie strike?

[01:34:37] **JOE:** That's how Murnane was. He was a stickler in that. He was looking for those things.

[01:34:43] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that right?

[01:34:44] **JOE:** When I was a steward—

[01:34:45] **HOWARD:** You were a steward?

[01:34:46] **JOE:** Yeah. I was steward in the gang for a long time. If there was any injustice—now, supposing they wanted to do something not in safety rules, or like in rigging the ship, or stowing the cargo—I would probably tell the gang leader or go to the walking boss. "Now, look, this isn't right," or something like that. That was always ok; there was no objection of any kind. Providing you knew your work and the work was done right. We had hours—that was important. Before, we had to work until the ship was finished.

[01:35:34] **ELSIE:** This is the important part.

[01:35:37] **JOE:** After the strike, we had six hours straight time, and anything above that was overtime. We could have stretched that six hours to nine hours with overtime, six hours and three hours overtime. But, beyond that, you could refuse it. They had to pace the gangs. Unless if you mutually agreed to finish the ship—maybe they said fifteen minutes or half an hour—well, that was possible. Over an hour, two hours, uh-huh. No more of that stuff. Because we had too many long hours before that.

[01:36:20] **HOWARD:** What about sling load limits or gang sizes? Did those ever become issues in a dispute?

[01:36:25] **JOE:** Yes. There was a ton to a load, so many boxes—a ton was a maximum load.

[01:36:35] **HOWARD:** Did you ever participate in a quickie strike over a sling load limit, or any kind of job action, actually?

[01:36:43] **JOE:** There have been during the years.

[01:36:48] **HOWARD:** How about between '34 and '36? That's when there were a lot of them, weren't there? Or were there?

[01:36:56] **JOE:** I don't remember. It was during the duration—there have been some stop-works occasionally. Not like—

[01:37:08] **HOWARD:** Because the employers charge that there was something like 580 work stoppages in certain ports for three years, from '34 to '37.

[01:37:18] **JOE:** I know they called a work stoppage—for instance, there was a dispute on the Matson [Inc.] line one time. I don't know which year it was. It came from San Francisco, "We're going to slow down. Not stop, but slow down." Well, it went down for about an hour, and nobody paid attention to it. Finally, it came from the ship's command or the employer that there was something wrong. They were threatening to do this and that. Then somebody had to be delegated to go down and explain what this stoppage or slowdown was all about. Didn't take very long, 10 or 15 or 20 minutes, "It's all clear. Let's go to work."

[01:38:14] **HOWARD:** There were a lot of sort of minor issues involved.

[01:38:17] **JOE:** Nothing serious that I can think of.

[01:38:21] **HOWARD:** Did you ever participate in a work stoppage between '34 and '37 that you can remember? Even a minor one? Or know anybody who did?

[01:38:33] **JOE:** Who got what?

[01:38:34] **HOWARD:** Any kind of little job action during that period.

[01:38:38] **JOE:** There might have been, but they weren't significant enough to remember. The gang that I worked, we worked logs and lumber. If somebody come and tell us, "Now you guys have to do this"—"Now, wait a minute, what's it all about?" They wanted to know what the score was. We were old men, all experienced guys. We ran up to the working boss, to the supercargo, "Now, wait a minute, what's going on here?" We wanted to know what the score was. We didn't start actions on the job. We went all up there and knocked on the door and said, "Let's straighten it out."

[01:39:14] **HOWARD:** Now you couldn't have even thought about doing that before '34, though, right?

[01:39:18] **JOE:** Heavens no!

[01:39:19] **ELSIE:** That's the point.

[01:39:20] **HOWARD:** So there was a real change in the working conditions—

[01:39:23] **JOE:** That was the main change—

[01:39:25] **HOWARD:** The ability of the men to confront issues?

[01:39:27] **JOE:** You did not fear being canned or eliminated for anything like that.

[01:39:33] **HOWARD:** What kind of an impact did that have on people? Did it affect their thinking, their view of themselves, or of the union, or how important it was? What function it served?

That's a difficult question. I wonder if I could be more specific.

[01:39:50] **JOE:** It gives you a security that you could plan, especially if you had a family and a home. You knew just about how much income you had. You could make plans. You knew your security and your foundation for yourself—which you could not have beforehand.

[01:40:08] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you this—the guys who were sort of anti-union or weren't real strong for the union, how did it affect them when they saw the union was—here it was, this institution that allowed you to be safe. It allowed you to have job security. It allowed you to speak up and have dignity. Did that have an impact on them?

[01:40:23] **JOE:** You mean on those that were anti-union?

[01:40:27] **HOWARD:** Yeah, or weren't real gung-ho for the union.

[01:40:30] **JOE:** We disciplined them. Those that were converted during the strike, that finally saw that there were wrong, they were made to pack the banner. We made them pack the banner go around the hall for hours and hours. And finally, we decided, well that was enough.

[01:40:48] **HOWARD:** What is this? Pack the banner?

[01:40:49] **JOE:** They maybe offered collusion; they probably worked for the employers in a locker or some other way, and they want to get back in the union. We had a screening committee. Rosco Craycraft and I, we were on the screening committee.

[01:41:04] **ELSIE:** Now, this was in '37.

[01:41:05] **JOE:** Well, it came after the strike. There were many, many fellows wanted to come back. That was after '34. Sometimes I was pretty tough on them. Rosco was more lenient than I was. Rosco would go, "Forget it." I knew some guys, they were stinkers. They had to make a living. After they corrected themselves, they were good men. Some of them got high up—they advanced, you know.

[01:41:37] **HOWARD:** Did you ever turn down people to get back in the union who had finks during '34?

[01:41:43] **JOE:** I believe I sent one or two of them. I said to bring some references whether they told or they talked when we asked them questions.

[01:41:52] **HOWARD:** These were mostly guys who you thought had been scabbing on you or something like that?

[01:41:58] **JOE:** I don't know if there were scabbing, but they didn't go on the picket line. They didn't take active duty on the strike.

[01:42:04] **HOWARD:** That's interesting. I never heard about that before.

[01:42:06] **ELSIE:** But people like that, after you accomplished something, they riding in long and enjoy it with the rest of them. Even though they didn't help! [laughing]

[01:42:18] **HOWARD:** That's common, unfortunately.

So there was a screening committee with you and Craycraft—does that mean just in the northwest was your screening committee? Was Craycraft in Local 8?

[01:42:30] **JOE:** He was in Local 8.

[01:42:31] **ELSIE:** Oh, yes!

[01:42:32] **HOWARD:** Because he's up in Seattle now.

[01:42:34] **ELSIE:** We know.

[01:42:35] **JOE:** That's a long story about Rosco. Let him tell you, though.

[01:42:37] **HOWARD:** Ok, yeah. So he was in Local 8. I didn't realize that. Ok, so you had a screening committee. It was a way of disciplining the union members.

[01:42:47] **JOE:** Not disciplining—checking. See, for a man that hasn't been registered up to that time, he had to get the registration from the employer and the union. To be able to get this, we had to verify him first. Then the employers could still reject him if they wanted to. I doubt very much that they would; if the union accepts him, they accept him, too. He had to have some kind of recommendation through his work and his conduct. You know how it is. Man recognizes man and so forth. Now, I don't want to say that some misfits didn't sneak through—they did. Because they were tough guys and all those kind. They didn't come before the screening board; they were ok to begin with. That's the funny thing, but that's life.

[01:43:48] **HOWARD:** You mentioned that you were loading scrap iron for Japan. As you know, in '37 and '38, the San Francisco local and the Pedro local had what they called "scrap iron incidents."

[01:43:59] **ELSIE:** That's right.

[01:44:00] **HOWARD:** Ever happen here in Portland?

[01:44:01] **JOE:** Yeah, there were times—

[01:44:04] **HOWARD:** It did?

[01:44:04] **JOE:** It didn't work.

[01:44:05] **HOWARD:** I never heard that.

[01:44:07] **JOE:** There was the Schnitzer [Steel] ; you know they had all the scrap iron. We made protests. I think we took some slow-downs one time loading, but that didn't work.

[01:44:23] **HOWARD:** Why didn't it work? What did that mean? The men didn't support it or?

[01:44:28] **JOE:** They didn't force the stopping. See, what they did down south—they thought that the scrap iron would eventually come up in ammunition against us. They were right.

[01:44:41] **ELSIE:** You mean you didn't enforce that here?

[01:44:45] **JOE:** We protested, but didn't enforce it very much. There might have been—

[01:44:49] **ELSIE:** Why?

[01:44:51] **HOWARD:** [laughing] You sound like me now! You always gotta ask that question.

[01:44:55] **JOE:** We weren't radical enough!

[01:44:56] **HOWARD:** That's what I'm asking you. Is that true? Do you think so?

[01:45:02] **JOE:** We did not—at least it's my impression—we did not obey all the rules that came from San Francisco.

[01:45:10] **HOWARD:** But neither did Los Angeles. You know, they were more—

[01:45:12] **JOE:** Oh, very much so. In Los Angeles, they were just like that.

[01:45:15] **HOWARD:** I know, and yet they followed this policy. Yet Portland didn't.

[01:45:23] **JOE:** I think during that time there was—Harry Bridges was not in high favor with the Portland group at that time.

[01:45:33] **ELSIE:** [laughing] That's right!

[01:45:35] **HOWARD:** Why? Because of the so-called red-baiting?

[01:45:37] **ELSIE:** That's it.

[01:45:39] **JOE:** You see, that was during the Truman years when there was a communist behind every bush—

[01:45:44] **HOWARD:** No, this is before. The scrap iron is before that. That's '36-37. '37-38, really. Just before World War II.

[01:45:55] **JOE:** I know it came during the Korean War there sometime. But it was not obeyed as strictly as it should have been.

[01:46:05] **HOWARD:** So there was some actions taken around it maybe in Portland.

[01:46:07] **JOE:** Maybe we didn't have as much scrap as they did down south.

[01:46:10] **HOWARD:** That's possible, too.

[01:46:14] **JOE:** That was only on log ships. There was [?Belgine?] and [?Welfarade?] , two locomotive ships that took mostly rail. They put the rail in the bottom for ballast, then logs and lumber. We didn't have very much scrap.

[01:46:34] **ELSIE:** I would say that Schnitzer had quite a lot of influence.

[01:46:40] **JOE:** Oh, very much so, because later on—

[01:46:43] **HOWARD:** Schnitzer's who, a big steel company?

[01:46:46] **ELSIE:** It's scrap steel.

[01:46:47] **JOE:** He had his own dock then. But that was after the war, it seems to me, when they come out with the scrap iron. They loaded whole shiploads of it, nothing but. That went to Japan.

[01:47:06] **HOWARD:** Ok, let's move on to the war. You want to take a little break for a bit here? Or just keep moving ahead? How do you feel?

[01:47:12] **ELSIE:** When you get hungry, I'll make you a cup of coffee and a cup of soup or something.

[01:47:18] **HOWARD:** That might be nice.

[01:47:20] **ELSIE:** Are you accustomed to eating your lunch at this time?

[01:47:24] **HOWARD:** I had a late breakfast, actually, so anytime you want to break for lunch—

[01:47:27] **ELSIE:** We had a late breakfast. In fact, we finished just before you got here!

[01:47:32] **JOE:** Let me make a suggestion. Elsie, she's got some albums of people and different things. When you look at it, maybe you'll get some more questions here.

[01:47:40] **HOWARD:** Yeah, maybe I should go through the interview now, though. Then, when I get done, I can go through these and if I have any other questions. How's that sound?

[01:47:48] **JOE:** Suit yourself.

[01:47:49] **HOWARD:** If you're getting tired, just let me know. We can get up and stretch for five minutes. That's all I'm saying.

[01:47:53] **JOE:** I don't know. I don't care. I talk while I'm resting. [laughs]

[01:47:56] **HOWARD:** Ok, great. Let's move on to the war, then, shall we? World War II. Were you working on the waterfront during the war?

[01:48:03] **JOE:** Yeah.

[01:48:06] **HOWARD:** Did the work process change at all? Was there any kind of an attempt to introduce a speed-up during the war? Was there any relaxation of work rules during the war?

[01:48:19] **JOE:** When the war started, I wasn't in Portland. I was in central Oregon. I had my own mine. I was operating a quicksilver mine. Then, when the work slowed up when the men were drafted, and they started to open up—they were building camps in Medford and different places in airfields. The men I had, I was paying them \$5/day. They were paying them \$10, \$11, or \$12. I couldn't keep the men. So finally I got down to the point I had to close the mine down. Then I had to get a job that would exempt me from the draft.

[01:49:10] **HOWARD:** Being a longshoremen did not exempt you, is that correct?

[01:49:13] **JOE:** But I wasn't working. I had to leave from the waterfront for three years.

[01:49:17] **HOWARD:** I see, ok.

[01:49:17] **ELSIE:** But it wouldn't exempt him anyway.

[01:49:19] **JOE:** When the war started, I was in Bend [Oregon] . Well, to be able to stay from the draft, I knew a friend. We used to play poker all the time in Redmond [Oregon] . He said, "Joe, I need a powder man on the airfield." To build a bomber field in Redmond. In Oregon.

[01:49:42] **ELSIE:** Redmond, Oregon.

[01:49:46] **JOE:** He knew that I could handle powder and all that stuff. We just had to blow up the whole area to build the runways and all that. So I took that job. After we finished the airfield, the same contactor wanted me to go to Midway [Atoll in North Pacific] . But I got to Portland first. I went to San Francisco from there, and I thought, well, I'm going to go down to San Francisco and see. I went on the waterfront, went to the hall. I had some friends down there. "My god, Joe, you haven't got card. You better go back to Portland and re-instate and then come down. Hell," he said, "and then you'll work." So I did. I went back to Portland—

[01:50:30] **HOWARD:** About what year was this, '42, '41?

[01:50:32] **JOE:** '41 or '42. Might have been the beginning of '42. I stepped in the hall, and, gee god, there was three or four, "Joe, come on, you got a job!" They wanted a winch driver; they wanted gang leaders. They wanted to sign me up. I said, "Wait a minute!" and I told them what the score was. "Well, you can do that tomorrow. Come now to the office, and come on and go to work." They were loading up ships.

[01:50:55] **HOWARD:** There was a lot of work here out of Portland, huh?

[01:50:57] **JOE:** Yeah, lots of work. But I wasn't ready for it. I didn't even have a room. I didn't even know where I was going to stay.

By the way, I broke up with my family at that time. My wife and I broke up during the goddamn war, when the war started.

[01:51:18] **ELSIE:** See, this is our second marriage. For both of us.

[01:51:18] **JOE:** I got a room right from the depot down to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and I took my suitcase and my bags down there. I had a job, and I had to go to work. I told the manager, "You give me a room, and I have to go to work." They said, "You don't have to change clothes. I'm going to take the gang and go. You supervise the job." Because there was many men who didn't know the waterfront work. I went to work; I believe I worked

two or three days before I really got acquainted with Portland again. That's the way I got back on the waterfront.

[01:51:56] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a few questions about this. If you were a longshoreman, you were not exempt from the draft. Is that correct?

[01:52:03] **JOE:** Yes, you were exempt.

[01:52:04] **HOWARD:** You were exempt!

[01:52:05] **JOE:** You were exempt, but I had a withdrawal card.

[01:52:08] **HOWARD:** Oh, I see, so once you became a longshoreman again—

[01:52:11] **ELSIE:** I was wrong then!

[01:52:11] **HOWARD:** Are you sure about that?

[01:52:13] **JOE:** Oh yes. Afterwards—Charlie [Ross] , who was coast committeeman, he came on the job, and he says, “Joe, you have to sign the papers and get re-instated.”

[01:52:27] **ELSIE:** Re-instated with the longshoremen, you men.

[01:52:28] **JOE:** Yes, re-registered.

[01:52:30] **ELSIE:** Are you sure longshoremen, were they exempt from the war?

[01:52:37] **JOE:** Oh, yes.

[01:52:38] **HOWARD:** All longshoremen, or just men who were doing key jobs like maybe winch drivers or something like that? Because I've read the records in the San Francisco International Library, and I think they're saying there that you had to apply for exemptions. They were giving them to what they called “key men,” who were experienced men working the winches—

[01:52:54] **JOE:** That might be possible.

[01:52:56] **HOWARD:** But that the regular guy working in the hold, for instance, didn't have an exemption.

[01:53:00] **ELSIE:** I was hazy on that subject, too.

[01:53:03] **JOE:** I was a key man. You have to be—

[01:53:03] **HOWARD:** You were a key man.

[01:53:04] **JOE:** Oh, yeah. You have to be so many years on the waterfront to take out a gang, to drive winches, or anything. I had all the required time.

[01:53:13] **HOWARD:** So you were exempt, though, as far as you remember.

[01:53:16] **JOE:** I must have been because Charlie Ross—he was coast committeeman at the time—he said, “Joe, by god, you better register because if you stay from the waterfront for too long, you’re going to have a defect in your pension system.”

[01:53:32] **HOWARD:** Do you have any idea how many men were drafted out of Local 8? Or how many volunteered? Approximately, again.

[01:53:40] **JOE:** We had a list of them, but—

[01:53:41] **HOWARD:** You did?

[01:53:41] **JOE:** Oh, yeah, we had a list of them. They all had their names and who were in the service—

[01:53:43] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:53:44] **JOE:** Oh yes.

[01:53:50] **HOWARD:** Because I’ve been looking for that for three years.

[01:53:52] **JOE:** There’s a list, if you go in the hiring hall—

[01:53:57] **ELSIE:** Would [?Ernie Baker?] be able to help him?

[01:54:01] **JOE:** I don’t know. Ernie’s mind isn’t working very good now. But I’ll tell you who to ask. Ask Bill Luch; he was a secretary or president.

[01:54:14] **HOWARD:** L-U-T-C-H?

[01:54:16] **JOE:** L-U-C-H, Luch.

[01:54:18] **ELSIE:** Oh! I thought it was L-E-U-T-C-H. Well, anyway.

[01:54:27] **HOWARD:** Ok, Luch, I can get it.

[01:54:32] **JOE:** All those young guys they are in the way-up-there offices, I know them when I see them. Bill Luch, he’ll have the records of them.

[01:54:37] **HOWARD:** What percentage of men, do you think, probably went in? Do you have any idea? Was it like 20 percent maybe? 30 percent? That’s a guess on your part, I understand.

[01:54:54] **ELSIE:** Well, [inaudible] was in the Navy. He—

[01:54:54] **JOE:** Well, yeah, but—

[01:55:01] **ELSIE:** How did he get in there at that time? Did he join or was he drafted or what?

[01:55:08] **JOE:** I really don’t know. I think he was drafted as a special man.

[01:55:16] **HOWARD:** They had something called the longshore battalion. Remember that?

[01:55:19] **JOE:** I think that’s what he was.

[01:55:22] **HOWARD:** Volunteer units.

[01:55:22] **JOE:** And when he came back, he was a petty officer when he came out of it. He had officer's rank.

[01:55:26] **ELSIE:** In the Navy.

[01:55:27] **JOE:** Well, in the—

[01:55:29] **ELSIE:** He was in the Navy. I've got a picture of him.

[01:55:33] **HOWARD:** They had the SeaBees was Navy. And the longshore battalions were in the Army.

[01:55:37] **JOE:** Yeah but they had a special name for them—SeaBees.

[01:55:40] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:55:41] **ELSIE:** Ok, now this is where I come in. He and I met in February of '44. He was at that time divorced, and he was working on the waterfront. Shortly after we got acquainted and started going together, he was thinking of joining the SeaBees. Now you tell him that part of it. You had a chance to go—

[01:56:12] **JOE:** I was not going to join the SeaBees. The contractor that helped to build the airport here, he looked me up, he visited me every so often. He wanted me to go. He had a contract with the government to build an airbase in Midway Island or someplace out there in the Pacific.

[01:56:31] **ELSIE:** Well, it would have been the SeaBees if you went.

[01:56:33] **JOE:** Well, they had revolvers. See, they needed experienced me. I'm not only experienced in ship, in loading and unloading and shipping, but I was a powderman. I worked for the state of Oregon. I worked for the government. I worked under-sea blasting and all that stuff. I was an expert at it.

[01:56:50] **HOWARD:** How many experienced men were there on the waterfront? Around 1942-43, during the middle of the war. How many old timers who knew the work? What percentage of them, do you think?

[01:57:00] **JOE:** Maybe 25 percent.

[01:57:11] **HOWARD:** So the majority of men were green, is that right?

[01:57:15] **JOE:** The majority came from god knows where.

[01:57:16] **HOWARD:** Where, do you think? Give me a guess. Either what part of the country, or what kind of jobs, or who they were.

[01:57:26] **JOE:** Most of them come out of the state of Oregon. They were from out of the state. I didn't know where they came from; they were all greenhorns.

[01:57:37] **HOWARD:** They were all white, weren't they? Oregon, the Portland local's always had a problem about bringing in non-white people.

[01:57:44] **JOE:** At that time they were all white. The colored influx came—that was another story—that came later.

[01:57:52] **ELSIE:** That's a story in itself.

[01:57:53] **HOWARD:** I know.

[01:57:59] **JOE:** Good, experienced men were scarce. I'll tell you, many—

[01:58:02] **HOWARD:** Why? Because they went into the service? Or they left the waterfront? Or what?

[01:58:07] **JOE:** They weren't going into service alone; they were slack periods in Portland. There was lots of work down south. So they transferred.

[01:58:18] **HOWARD:** Oh, they did?

[01:58:19] **JOE:** Many of them, they went from here down to San Francisco. They went to San Diego [California] —any place where the climate wasn't intense. People like change.

[01:58:29] **HOWARD:** So many experienced men transferred south during the early period of the war?

[01:58:33] **JOE:** Oh yes. Many of them remained there, never got back [to Portland] .

[01:58:41] **HOWARD:** Who was likely to do that, among the experienced men? Were they the single guys pretty much or older guys?

[01:58:47] **JOE:** Who inclined to change?

[01:58:48] **HOWARD:** To transfer, yeah. Just anybody, or was there—

[01:58:53] **ELSIE:** Can't describe their character.

[01:58:56] **JOE:** Anybody. Some of them liked the climate, and others were asked. Somebody induced them to go down there. Somebody in California or some place. They induced them—

[01:59:04] **HOWARD:** It wasn't anything like, "I'm a radical. I'm going to be near Bridges in his local," or something?

[01:59:08] **JOE:** Oh, no, no.

[01:59:09] **HOWARD:** That wouldn't enter into it?

[01:59:09] **JOE:** No, that wouldn't enter into it.

[01:59:10] **ELSIE:** Not from Portland.

[01:59:13] **JOE:** That would be the last thing in the world.

[01:59:14] **HOWARD:** Would you say that Portland was one of the more conservative locals?

[01:59:19] **ELSIE:** Yes, I would.

[01:59:22] **HOWARD:** You would.

[01:59:22] **ELSIE:** Very definitely.

[01:59:22] **JOE:** Yes, very much so.

[01:59:26] **ELSIE:** And Oregon as a state is a very peculiar state. I love it, but I'll tell you what—they have ideas which are, well, way out. But sometimes the other states follow suit.

[01:59:43] **HOWARD:** Sometimes they're good. All the ecology stuff they've done I think are great.

[01:59:46] **ELSIE:** Like this business of returning the cans and the bottles?

[01:59:51] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:59:51] **ELSIE:** That's just one example.

[01:59:53] **HOWARD:** First in the nation.

[01:59:55] **JOE:** Oregonians are basically conservative people.

[02:00:03] **ELSIE:** I'm proud—

[02:00:04] **HOWARD:** They're very independent.

[02:00:07] **ELSIE:** Yes, they are. And it doesn't mean because one of them thinks this way that the others will go along. They're very independent.

[02:00:13] **HOWARD:** I know. When did the amount of work, the volume of work, pick up? Was it sort of in the middle of the war? It sounds like work might have been slack in the early phases of the war. Then it picked up?

[02:00:23] **JOE:** It started to pick up when they started to ship the Russian cargo. The Columbia River became the main source of exports for Russia. We ship everything from a toothbrush to a locomotive.

[02:00:36] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:00:37] **JOE:** Yes.

[02:00:37] **ELSIE:** And communism was not a bad word!

[02:00:44] **JOE:** It was a style then.

[02:00:45] **ELSIE:** That was the style. The Russian ships were coming in, and we were friends with Russia. That was at the same time I worked at Willamette Iron and Steel engineering plan department.

[02:01:00] **HOWARD:** Were there any open communists in the union, in Local 8? Guys who were saying, "I'm a member of the Communist Party."

[02:01:07] **JOE:** No, in fact—

[02:01:09] **ELSIE:** They don't have to come out and say it.

[02:01:10] **JOE:** Two or three men that, by some assumptions

[END PART FOUR/BEGIN PART FIVE]

[02:01:19] **HOWARD:** Did politics have anything to do with? Did his politics have anything to do with it? Let me explain what I mean by that. Is it possible—they knew Bridges had a vision of the world. Bridges' vision of the world was that workers need a better place in the society. They need more respect and more dignity.

[02:01:34] **ELSIE:** That's right.

[02:01:35] **HOWARD:** And the workers might have said, "Bridges is looking out for our interests. Bridges has a view of the world. We may not always be communists or socialists, or whatever he is, but we always figure Bridges is on the right track. That's why we support him."

[02:01:47] **ELSIE:** Right.

[02:01:48] **HOWARD:** Is that possible?

[02:01:49] **JOE:** Something like that.

[02:01:49] **HOWARD:** Because there's a number of things you can look at. You can say, well, Bridges just delivered the goods like any other union leader, which he did. But I don't think that a total answer.

[02:01:58] **JOE:** Oh, Bridges was opposed terribly! To some of his ideas—you have no idea!

[02:02:05] **HOWARD:** Is that so? Why?

[02:02:07] **JOE:** Because he was for the majority. Now, supposing the Northwest here, if they had some kind of deal that they want to put over, elect something, Harry would say, "Now, wait a minute. That doesn't fit into our organization. We want to be a democratic and aggressive union." They would advocate, they'd talk against him, and everything else. But he didn't change. After they talked themselves out, he said, "Now, look here. After you get it started, what are you going to do? How are you going to support the other group? Are you going to stay independent?"

The way he broke away from the CIO—he was the vice president of the CIO, but we had to contribute so much per capita. When they had a meeting here in Portland—that's where it took place—there was [Victor] Reuther and all those big shots from the CIO. They were reading the financial report. It wasn't analyzed properly. The longshore group goes, "Wait a minute. We want to have the accounting of the money that we have contributed, where is it and how." "We won't show you the books." That started it. I think there was even Bill Lawrence—he said, "Now, wait a minute. We don't consider the financial report completed until the books are open, until we get what we're asking for." There was a mismanagement. Reuther, I remember, he got awful. He got swinging his arms, and I think the longshore group walked out.

[02:03:43] **ELSIE:** That was the break between them.

[02:03:45] **HOWARD:** '37, right?

[02:03:45] **JOE:** That was the end of the CIO and the longshoremen. They went independent. Now, the next thing was, what in the hell are you guys going to do? Then there was the dissention within our own ranks. Jesus, Bridges is crazy. Well, he was right in so many ways. He threw rocks at them. Let's see what he's going to do. Finally we got together. But the main thing was the mechanization, the pension fund, and the compensation for the lost men that was unsurpassed. Nobody else got it. When that was really put in a contract, that the men that

were released at old age and so forth, there was a provision for them. Which they did not have. What is more, it was in the contract that the trust fund for the longshoremen was secure. Then the East Coast came in, and they wanted to get their share of the pie. When they saw that there was the money, they wanted to get it in conjunction with their pension funds. That's really what burnt the longshore union—

[02:05:05] **ELSIE:** But I give Harry Bridges credit for being able to put over that mechanization clause, and the pensions, and all that. We wouldn't have the pension that we have along with all the other people—

[02:05:17] **JOE:** That's what kept Harry Bridges on top.

[02:05:17] **ELSIE:** —if it wasn't for Harry Bridges.

[02:05:20] **JOE:** He put his reputation, everything, on the line. He says, "If we can't have it," and he stuck with it. It was Bill Lawrence from down south—he was a good man—and there was a secretary from Seattle. I can't think of his [name] . Several fellows. They saw what Harry Bridges was up to. He had foresight. When you see a man, when he speaks up at the correct time, eventually it was recognized by the employers. There was one of the employers, the president of the PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] , can't think of it—

[02:05:58] **HOWARD:** Paul St. Sure?

[02:06:05] **JOE:** No. . .

[02:06:05] **ELSIE:** He doesn't know. Don't try to remember names, Joe, you're memory's too bad.

[02:06:09] **JOE:** He was later.

[02:06:11] **HOWARD:** When was this? What period?

[02:06:15] **JOE:** Well, it was in the forties sometime.

[02:06:18] **HOWARD:** Oh, that would have been—there was an [?Alman Roth?] , who was in charge of it for a while. There was a [?T. G. Plant?] . Remember him?

[02:06:28] **JOE:** Plant was. . .

[02:06:30] **HOWARD:** Harrison? Guy named [?Gregory Harrison?] ?

[02:06:33] **JOE:** No. It was the boss of the PMA.

[02:06:37] **HOWARD:** That would have been Alman Roth.

[02:06:41] **JOE:** No, someone different. But whoever that man was, he was anti-Bridges. He was opposed to him—

[02:06:44] **ELSIE:** There were many up here that are anti-Bridges.

[02:06:51] **JOE:** Then finally I think when we got the head guys of the Bank of America, when they handled the trust fund and all this, and Barry, our financial man, and Louis Goldblatt had a lot to do with it. They were all men that had brains, and they could get the quiet, negotiable way.

[02:07:20] **ELSIE:** By the way, Louis Goldblatt is one man respected by all the ILWU.

[02:07:28] **HOWARD:** Yeah, what about—let me go off the record here.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Alright, I want to ask you one more question about the war before we move on. That was, you mentioned that Russian cargo shipments increased the volume of work in Local 8. About when did that happen? Do you remember what year and what month approximately when work began to pick up because of that?

[02:07:50] **JOE:** Oh, the Russian ships came here for maybe two or three years but it was only just a season. They were going to Siberia. They were material to build the railroads. Then we give them the locomotive and the rolling stock. Then all the equipment that was shipped by the Siberian railroad inland. But it was only from the summer up to the fall. Then in the wintertime it froze up there. A lot of the [inaudible] was icebound.

[02:08:28] **HOWARD:** Ok, and do you remember the years? Was that like '42-45 or something like that?

[02:08:32] **JOE:** That was later, that was.

[02:08:34] **HOWARD:** Oh.

[02:08:37] **JOE:** I would say '44.

[02:08:39] **HOWARD:** Oh, that late.

[02:08:40] **JOE:** '44, '45. Maybe even '43. I don't recall.

[02:08:47] **HOWARD:** So it sounds like the first couple of years of the war there wasn't much work in Portland.

[02:08:51] **JOE:** No, there wasn't. That's the reason so many people left.

[02:08:53] **HOWARD:** So then they transferred down to San Francisco and L.A. and places like that where the work was plentiful. Then later on in the war, work began to pick up as the Russian ships came in.

[02:09:05] **JOE:** Some of the fellows came back, and other did not because some of them got good jobs down there, and they stayed there. By that time, the ships had started to close down, and there was a big release from the shipyards. Then about that time, the Negroes started to show up on the waterfront.

[02:09:29] **HOWARD:** When was that? Right after the war?

[02:09:33] **JOE:** It came toward the end of the war.

[02:09:37] **HOWARD:** Now, they came here principally because there was work available. Is that right?

[02:09:41] **JOE:** Right. They got laid off of a shipyard. Then it came through Washington [D.C.] —I'm speaking of the Negro situation. Edith Green, she was a congresswoman, and she was connected with the labor act. The Black people back there, they put the pressure on the Congress to get the people employed on the West Coast. They tried to force the Negroes, a percentage—there was so many people here in the state, and they wanted a percentage to go on the waterfront. Well, it caused considerable controversy. We had a large number of extra men.

[02:10:43] **HOWARD:** What kind of men?

[02:10:43] **JOE:** Extra men. A large number. Extra men, they had to take their turn to get registered as regular men. We wanted so many registered regular men, and then the others were extra. Then when the pressure came from Washington and from Edith Green, that we should take all the Negroes in, or so many from the extra board—we couldn't do it because that would crowd our ranks and just overflow membership.

Then San Francisco had a surplus of Black people. They demanded that we're going to take some of the longshoremen. Instead of taking the permit men here, take the regular longshoremen from San Francisco. There was quite a controversy. The Portland local was notified that if they don't take the surplus of the regular men from down south, they're going to come up here and they're going to open the port up. Something like that.

Well, the question came, how are we going to settle that? I don't know if I volunteered or whether they told me to go down there. There was Henry Schmidt—he was labor relations man down there. They said, "Joe, why don't you go down there and see Henry and see what we can do about this opening the port and getting all these surplus guys a job." Well, then I saw Henry about it. He said, "Joe, we know all about it. We got too darn many of them, and you're going to take extra men." I explained to him what this waiting line was. I said, "We happen to have extra men that already have four, five, and six years. They're taking their turn to be registered." He could understand that. He says, "Well, I didn't know that." I said, "We'll work it out. When the time comes, we'll take them in but not before that."

While I was gone, the pressure from San Francisco got severe. We called a meeting here in Portland. They made a move, and they decided to take in all the extra men in and give them a book. Register them all, take them into the union. There was quite—I don't know the number of men, but, anyway, it was an enormous amount of influx that were carded or working for us. But, nevertheless, that ended the squawk from San Francisco to have the extra men working here in Portland and regular men being laid off in San Francisco.

When I got back, they said, "Too late, Joe. We ain't got extra men. They're all regular men." They beat me to it. That created animosity between San Francisco and Portland. They were mad down there at us, and we were mad at San Francisco.

[02:13:48] **HOWARD:** Oh, I see, San Francisco wanted you to take their regular men who—

[02:13:52] **JOE:** Regular men instead of taking ours. But after we initiated them, then they were regular men.

[02:13:59] **HOWARD:** Yeah, so what you did instead was you took your extra men in Local 8 and made them regular men.

[02:14:10] **JOE:** We made them regular men in that one meeting. That was all where the controversy was.

[02:14:16] **HOWARD:** And most of those extra men were Black, is that—or not necessarily?

[02:14:19] **JOE:** No, no. There was hardly any Black.

[02:14:22] **HOWARD:** Hardly any.

[02:14:24] **JOE:** Another thing—Edith Green, we kinda shut her out. Because she wanted Black men in, but we had so many white men that were on the extra board.

[02:14:33] **HOWARD:** Now, see, you're telling me that racism wasn't much of a factor in keeping Black people out. Is that right? Or was it?

[02:14:42] **JOE:** It was for a while, yes.

[02:14:44] **HOWARD:** I mean, the explanation that you're giving me is really that it was just the explanation of scarcity of work, and that racism didn't have anything to do with it.

[02:14:51] **JOE:** That was the main thing.

[02:14:52] **HOWARD:** Racism or scarcity of work?

[02:14:54] **JOE:** Racism was second. The main thing is there were so many men that work on the extra board. Then, when the pressure came from Washington to take the Black men in, what would we do with the permit men that were out there working when they were needed and being unemployed when there was no work? So we decided we're going to play fair with those extra men that waited so long. They should get in the regular line before the Black men or anybody from San Francisco, and that's where the controversy was. That one meeting, by initiating all of them, that big amount, that shut Edith Green up. I told her, "Well,"—

[02:15:40] **ELSIE:** For the time being!

[02:15:43] **JOE:** But it worked!

[02:15:44] **ELSIE:** We liked Edith Green. Friendly with her, but here's the thing—the rules came from up above, higher than Edith Green. You had to obey them—that's the reason San Francisco and the rest of them—because it was this business of a percentage of that they allowed to work.

[02:16:12] **JOE:** You had to do it legally to avoid—because they have to give a reason for why it was done. That was to become regular men!

[02:16:19] **ELSIE:** Well, yeah, but I'm talking about the government. They decided that a percentage of the white people that were working had to be Negro. You follow me? That was at the bottom of it.

[02:16:34] **HOWARD:** See, Gerry Bulcke, when he was on some maritime committee during the war, he said he came up to Portland once, and there was a shortage in a gang. There were a number of Black guys sitting in the hall. He said to the dispatcher, "Put these Black guys to work to fill out the gang." And the dispatcher said, "No, the guy who's the gang boss won't work with Blacks." I asked Gerry about that. He said that was very common in Portland. There was a lot of racism in Portland.

[02:16:58] **JOE:** That happened one time.

[02:16:59] **ELSIE:** Some of the people—

[02:17:00] **HOWARD:** Just once? Maybe that was the time he was telling me about.

[02:17:02] **JOE:** To my knowledge, there was one gang leader. He would never let any—but I'll tell you what happened to the gang I worked one time. I was on deck guard. I didn't have my gang at that time; I was working in another gang. Sure enough, there was a Black face down below. But he was so green, my god, I think that was the first time he was on a ship. He didn't know what the board was; he didn't know what the hook was. He didn't know when to look up. Immediately when you have an inexperienced man with you need to be careful. You don't want him to be killed or hurt him, see? I said how in the hell did that guy get in there? Nobody knew. He was sent down from the unemployment office. I had occasion to talk to him. I wanted to just find out. I said, "How come you got on the job?" Boy, could he talk. He could talk with his hands and feet. He was a preacher

from Chicago [Illinois] , and they sent him over here to break the ice and get the colored people on the waterfront. I said, “Man, you are going to a hell of a place to preach!” He survived it.

[02:18:11] **ELSIE:** Don’t talk—

[02:18:11] **JOE:** It’s alright. We were talking like longshoremen talk.

[02:18:17] **ELSIE:** You get carried away.

[02:18:19] **HOWARD:** I’ve heard much worse than that, I’ll tell you. I interviewed some sailors on the East Coast once. We sat down with three bottles of beer. [laughs]

[02:18:26] **JOE:** I’m telling you it’s awkward to get an inexperienced man down amongst the other fellows. Maybe they have some prejudice against colored men on top of it. They have to work for him because he doesn’t know what to do. He’s in the way.

[02:18:36] **HOWARD:** But you have to do that with any inexperienced man, regardless of the color, right?

[02:18:44] **JOE:** Yes, you do, but he wasn’t built like a longshoreman. He just didn’t have no motivation to do any hard work.

[02:18:51] **HOWARD:** Was he the first Black guy in the local then? Or there was a few?

[02:18:55] **JOE:** First Black man that I ever remember worked in the hold when I was on deck.

[02:18:58] **HOWARD:** Is that right? What year was that, about? During the war, or?

[02:19:03] **JOE:** No, that was after the war. We had one man from Tacoma. He was a regular longshoreman. He was a good man. He was a good longshoremen. Boy, everybody liked him. He was good. He stayed here for about a month on a visiting card. If anybody can do his work—there might have been some prejudice against colored people, but most of it is—longshore work is hard work. If you have to do something for somebody else, and he’s always in your way, and then he’s an awkward guy, the dislike grows on you. That’s the way it is.

[02:19:43] **HOWARD:** How many Blacks were there in this union during the thirties? Were there any Blacks?

[02:19:47] **JOE:** In the thirties? No.

[02:19:49] **HOWARD:** None, absolutely none? All white?

[02:19:50] **JOE:** There weren’t any in Portland!

[02:19:52] **HOWARD:** There weren’t?

[02:19:52] **JOE:** No.

[02:19:57] **ELSIE:** We don’t have many Blacks.

[02:19:58] **HOWARD:** I know. You do now; they’re 5 percent of the city.

[02:19:59] **JOE:** In the thirties, to be honest with you, you could ride a bus or a streetcar—I don't remember seeing any Black people at that time. Elsie said that when she was going to school, her parents had a woman come clean the house, but then I didn't know that there were Black people here.

[02:20:18] **HOWARD:** There were some Black people.

[02:20:18] **ELSIE:** There were a few, you know, just a few. But not like there are Down South.

[02:20:26] **HOWARD:** Then there were some Blacks who came in during the war, but just a small number? Or none at all? I can't figure that out.

[02:20:33] **ELSIE:** They came in the shipyards, that's for sure.

[02:20:35] **HOWARD:** But how about Local 8?

[02:20:37] **JOE:** No, not regular. There were not registered Blacks—

[02:20:40] **HOWARD:** Racism had to be a factor, didn't it?

[02:20:43] **JOE:** I don't know of any Black men being registered.

[02:20:44] **HOWARD:** If they were employed in the shipyard, but they weren't employed in Local 8, sounds like there might have been some discrimination going on.

[02:20:51] **ELSIE:** They could make more money in the shipyard.

[02:20:53] **HOWARD:** Could they? Than Local 8?

[02:20:55] **ELSIE:** Of course!

[02:20:57] **JOE:** The shipyards, they paid more money I think. To my knowledge, there haven't been any registered men or regular longshoremen, Black longshoremen, during the war. It came later, way, way later.

[02:21:17] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a couple more questions about the war, and then we'll move on. Were work rules at all suspended during the war? In the effort to build national unity to fight the Axis powers? You remember anything like that?

[02:21:39] **JOE:** No. Contractual rules were written in the contract, and, if there was any doubt of safety rules, we had the labor relations committee. You could put a complaint to the labor relations committee, and it would come up in the next meeting of the executive board. It was eliminated, taken care of. There was hardly any disputes on the job. If there was anything—now, supposing the cargo was built too close to the hatch, there was no safety to uncover the hatches, all you have to do is make a note or something. It was changed.

[02:22:18] **HOWARD:** Were there any strikes or work stoppages that you remember during the war? Absolutely none? Any minor disputes even?

[02:22:30] **JOE:** No. There have been probably some refusals of men—for instance, when we loaded rails on the Russian ships. Maybe we had regular winch drivers and maybe gang bosses. Then we had Russians down in the hold. We asked for special compensation to do that because we couldn't finish the men, and that was wild labor and so forth. If they didn't do the right thing down there, if they violated safety rules, we just told our

authorities, and that's all there was to it. The supercargo committee told the Russian officers, "Let's go. No work." That's the way it was. There was never any trouble.

[02:23:24] **HOWARD:** Bridges, during the early phases of the war, said—and this is almost a quote—we have to turn our unions into an instrument of the speed-up. He made a number of statements to the effect that from now on, unions have to learn to push the worker. They have to learn to raise productivity. "We have to do everything for the war effort. We have to suspend class conflict; we have to suspend our unions almost." I'm wondering if that had any impact on the way the work was carried out. Were sling load limits increased?

[02:23:55] **JOE:** To push loading the Russian ships?

[02:23:57] **HOWARD:** Well, on anything. Bridges' position was, as you remember, that this was a war against the fascists. We had to all make the commitment. Longshoremen and everyone else in the working class had to work overtime. I don't know if it had any impact or not. But I'm wondering if work became more difficult. If there was sort of a speed-up introduced. He went to L.A. and tried to get them to drop their sling load limits at Local 13. They said no. In San Francisco he tried to get them to reduce the size of the gangs; the men said no.

[02:24:31] **JOE:** If they had tried to cut down the load limits, we would object, too.

[02:24:36] **HOWARD:** You would have?

[02:24:37] **JOE:** Oh, yeah. Sometimes, they put on two or three boxes just to top off, and maybe other things to bring the load in. "Hey, winchie!" [taps table]

[02:24:48] **HOWARD:** During the war this happened? Or do you remember?

[02:24:51] **JOE:** Anytime. Even before they were really informed on the dock how big of loads to build. Sometimes by accident, they would—oh, just send the load out again. That's all there is to it. There was no quarrel about it; they just took the load off and made it a legal load. That's all there is to it.

[02:25:12] **HOWARD:** So, as far as you remember, the work didn't really become any more difficult during the war.

[02:25:19] **JOE:** No, it had become more lax. People were more relaxed.

[02:25:22] **HOWARD:** They were?

[02:25:23] **JOE:** Oh, yeah.

[02:25:23] **HOWARD:** What do you mean by that? What does that mean?

[02:25:27] **JOE:** Hell, the money was coming in. The employer didn't push because the government was paying for it. Need an extra man? We'll give you two.

[02:25:38] **HOWARD:** Did they ever work a four-on, four-off arrangement here in this port?

[02:25:42] **JOE:** Not yet, not at that time.

[02:25:44] **HOWARD:** Not at that time.

[02:25:45] **JOE:** No, that came later.

[02:25:46] **HOWARD:** Ok. So the work was actually more relaxed?

[02:25:49] **JOE:** Well, I'll tell you instances when they were loading ships. I went one time up aboard; I went to Vancouver [Washington] . They were going to be some heavy lifts. You know what a heavy lift is?

[02:26:03] **HOWARD:** No.

[02:26:06] **JOE:** Cargo that is heavier than the ships we would handle. You have to have a crane or something to handle it. We had a crane on a barge. They needed a hatch tender and two signalmen. There were three of us, and they didn't have any men down in Vancouver so they sent us from Portland over there. I was the oldest man on the job, so I took the house tender job. When we got over there, the walking boss says, "Joe, I don't know when we'll need you guys," and he told us what the score was. He says, "You can rig the boom and get it all set. When we need to have a lift, then we'll use it." The crane operator down below, he knew what the procedure was. We rigged the boom, set the guides, and all that stuff. That lasted for two weeks. We never did a day. They never used us. But we got paid, the man down below got paid, the boss got paid. Because it was a government job, and that's all there was to it.

[02:27:19] **HOWARD:** So you basically were paid for two weeks for doing nothing?

[02:27:27] **JOE:** Well, we had to go down there on the job. We had to stay there, being ready, but we never did anything because the heavy lift didn't show up or whatever it was.

[02:27:36] **HOWARD:** So you just reported for work, really, for two weeks and got paid?

[02:27:41] **JOE:** We got transportation and work and everything. We got paid by the hour, but they just didn't use us. That's all. We were there. Now, under ordinary time, if the employers had to pay for it, don't worry. You wouldn't stick around there that long.

[02:28:00] **HOWARD:** Did the work become maybe a little easier? Were the gangs pushing it a little less because the employers didn't push them? Were the foremen, the walking bosses, pushing pretty hard during the war to get out production?

[02:28:13] **JOE:** I would say there was more laxity then.

[02:28:15] **HOWARD:** More laxity. That's interesting.

[02:28:19] **ELSIE:** That's because the government was paying for it. [laughing] Don't you realize?

[02:28:23] **JOE:** Uncle Sam paid the bill.

[02:28:25] **ELSIE:** People nowadays, they think if Uncle Sam pays for something, that we're not paying for it. That's the fallacy of the whole thing.

[02:28:37] **HOWARD:** I know.

[02:28:38] **JOE:** I'll tell you what the result was. After the war, and competitive business started again, the men were so spoiled—all those war babies that came over here, they thought longshoring is a picnic. But then when they had to produce again, that's when the notice came.

[02:28:57] **HOWARD:** That's when the what came?

[02:29:02] **JOE:** Then they have to get mechanization and everything because people were careless, cargo was damaged, and one thing and another. Finally the employers figured, well, we have to do something because they could never change the war babies into productive longshoremen. It was almost impossible.

[02:29:19] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:29:20] **JOE:** Oh, god. I'll tell you, I've seen things—it was prohibitive. But then, finally, when they come in, and there were men observing—I was consulted many times. "Joe, what can we do?" If you get the cargo in such a way that you fellows couldn't get into it, or that didn't have to handle case by case, then they wouldn't destroy it. They wouldn't break it down. Till finally palletization came. Finally boxes and stuff like this, and that led to mechanization.

[02:29:59] **HOWARD:** So, it was in part an attempt to reduce the theft and damage to cargo?

[02:30:06] **JOE:** Damage to cargo, and, just, it was—

[02:30:12] **HOWARD:** Were the war babies not very good longshoremen when it came to being good workers?

[02:30:19] **JOE:** They were trained in a relaxed way. You couldn't make good out of them because they thought, "Why? What for? There's no need for it." They didn't know how to take care of gear. They were careless.

[02:30:37] **HOWARD:** How many men in the local, at Local 8, were so-called war babies by the end of the war? What proportion of the local?

[02:30:44] **JOE:** I would say half of it.

[02:30:45] **HOWARD:** Half, huh?

[02:30:49] **JOE:** Too many.

[02:30:50] **HOWARD:** After the war, did guys who had left for whatever reason, to go into the Army or to go to another industry, did any of them return to Local 8?

[02:30:59] **JOE:** Yeah, they got a good withdrawal. Military service was counted as active time.

[02:31:04] **HOWARD:** Did many guys who took withdrawals actually come back to Local 8?

[02:31:11] **JOE:** Well, for a while they could, but there was a time limit on it.

[02:31:14] **HOWARD:** There was?

[02:31:15] **JOE:** Yeah, if they stayed away too long. The reason for it was because the pension committee. The mechanization money. The man was not entitled to any compensation—

[END PART FIVE/BEING PART SIX]

[02:31:33] **HOWARD:** —of those who took out withdrawals, did quite a number of them return? Maybe 100? I don't have any idea what we're talking about in numbers. How many do you think took withdraw cards from the union during the war? Maybe that's the question.

[02:31:49] **ELSIE:** Do you mean withdraw or transfer?

[02:31:52] **HOWARD:** Withdrawal and transfer, how many?

[02:31:55] **JOE:** Oh, now, that's a different story. There were quite a few transfers.

[02:31:57] **HOWARD:** Ok, how many withdrawals and how many transfers? Maybe that's what I need to know. Approximately.

[02:32:05] **JOE:** I would say transfers, maybe 20 or 30. Withdrawals, maybe around 10.

[02:32:13] **HOWARD:** That's all?

[02:32:14] **JOE:** That's all.

[02:32:15] **HOWARD:** That's not a real large group of people then in any event, is it?

[02:32:18] **JOE:** But we had influx of war babies. They came in from the shipyards. There was a big percentage working the shipyards.

[02:32:30] **ELSIE:** Talking about transfers, two of our friends that are up here now transferred and were down south during the '34 strike.

[02:32:44] **JOE:** But I don't know just the numbers, Elsie.

[02:32:49] **ELSIE:** And they're back up here now.

[02:32:56] **JOE:** We had transfers from the north. They closed some ports up north, and there was fellows who were transferring. They were regular men. Now some of them, they were conveniently called "longshoremen at large," or something like this because they closed the port. Now, for instance, during the Korean conflict, they built longshore gangs and harbors in Alaska. Then, after the Army got through with this extra work, they closed the port down. They had a surplus of men. Some of them were longshoremen; some weren't. But they had to be dispersed, and they had to be taken care of. We got some of those.

[02:33:41] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question about the gangs themselves. Were the gangs fairly steady? Composed of the same sort of men throughout the war? Or did you have an influx so that the actual gangs were changing? Did you work with the same gang throughout the whole war?

[02:33:54] **JOE:** Before the war, we had steady gangs.

[02:33:57] **HOWARD:** Which meant the same guys worked together day after day.

[02:33:59] **JOE:** All the time. Because the cargo required it. See, we had special gangs for special cargoes. Then, during the war, everything changed. Then, finally—

[02:34:10] **HOWARD:** What does that mean, exactly? How did things change?

[02:34:13] **JOE:** Because there was so many men that could not specify for special cargo, but they wanted to work. Finally the majority voted in a meeting to eliminate the regular gangs and just have a board.

[02:34:28] **HOWARD:** Ok, so everyone came off the board?

[02:34:33] **JOE:** Except the gang leader and two winch drivers, maybe three.

[02:34:37] **HOWARD:** Ok.

[02:34:38] **JOE:** They were regular in the gang, but the rest of them were off the board. It varied. Some—

[02:34:44] **HOWARD:** That's interesting. Is it possible that the guys that were working together were the most experienced, and they stayed together throughout the war? In other words, the experienced guys in the gang were your foremen, or whatever they're called, gang man, your winch drivers, people like that, right? And they're the old timers, experienced guys.

[02:35:01] **JOE:** You had to have an experienced crew—you have to rig a ship; you have to set the hatch. With all green men, you couldn't do it.

[02:35:11] **HOWARD:** Did you work in the same gang pretty much throughout the war? I know the other guys, the hold men, they were all changing constantly. But as a winch driver, were you fairly steady in your employment, in the same gang?

[02:35:24] **JOE:** Yes, I worked for months and maybe a year or two steady in one gang.

[02:35:30] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:35:30] **JOE:** Oh, yeah. I was more or less a gang man at that time.

[02:35:34] **ELSIE:** How many years were you with [?Oscar Kosky?]?

[02:35:38] **JOE:** Oh, god, I don't know. Until he died and they took the gang away.

[02:35:42] **ELSIE:** Well, it was many years.

[02:35:44] **JOE:** I worked probably four or five years for Thompson. Then I worked maybe two or three years for [?Harry Walk?] . I worked one summer for [?Max Shultz?] .

[02:35:54] **ELSIE:** Come up to my time, will you? You worked at night for quite a while when we were married. Was that a gang?

[02:36:14] **JOE:** That was [?Lowenstein?] . I worked for him for several—

[02:36:16] **ELSIE:** By the way, that was when you got mad at—

[02:36:19] **JOE:** Oh, at Murnane, he was in that gang. Oh, he was a fly in the soup. He knew he couldn't do very much against me, but he tried to make it miserable for me. But I thought, The heck with him!

[02:36:34] **HOWARD:** What did that do to the sense of solidarity that the men had? If you're in a gang where everyone worked together for a year or more, you got real close, I imagine.

[02:36:42] **ELSIE:** Oh, many years! Four, five, six!

[02:36:44] **HOWARD:** And then you're in a gang where everyone's coming and going every other day. They're pulling new plug men in, no-experience men. What did that do? Did you feel a sense of family in those gangs, or not?

[02:36:54] **JOE:** What you feel like—you have an obligation. When you go out to work, if you belong to the gang, there is a competitive spirit on the waterfront, at least in Portland. When a gang—if they could produce good jobs, if they could handle the cargo, they had always a preference job when they got out. A preference hatch and one thing or another. Therefore, they associate themselves with good men. Even men off the board, if there was a call, “What gang is it?” Gang so-and-so. “Oh, sign me up on this gang!” They wanted to go in the gang with a good, secure gang leader and winch drivers and so forth. The more experienced men they are, the better work you produce, makes it easier.

[02:37:41] **HOWARD:** So how did you deal with it during the war when you had all these green men coming in? And you had maybe yourself, another winch driver maybe, another gang boss or something like that—were old timers. They knew one another. You had all these young war babies coming in. Did you have a sense that you were still a part of a working team and a unit?

[02:37:59] **JOE:** I’ll tell you, you waited for the hour to get relieved.

[02:38:02] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:38:04] **JOE:** [laughing] But it’s a strange thing. Men recognized authority and knowledge and experience. When they see that somebody really knows, and it means he’s right and he’s reasonable, they’ll mind. But you can’t bark at them. You have to be reasonable and explain to them what it is. You get cooperation. Working with a man two days, you’ll know a hell of a lot about the way he acts and the way he does the work. He can help you and you can help him. That’s the way it works.

[02:38:40] **HOWARD:** Ok, I guess what I’m after is a more difficult sort of a question. I’m not even sure I’m asking it right, but did you really feel that you were part of a family when you went to work during the war? The same way that you felt before the war? I can see working with a guy, shoulder to shoulder, for a year or two in the same gang—you get real close. Real close. You know everything about that guy. I’m wondering whether that existed during the war because you had the gangs changing all the time. One time you’re working next to [?Tom?] ; one time you’re working next to [?Dick?] . Am I making too much out of this?

[02:39:18] **ELSIE:** May I answer it? When he was satisfied with the gang, he stayed there for years. The war had nothing to do with it.

[02:39:30] **HOWARD:** What about the greenhorns that were coming in?

[02:39:33] **ELSIE:** The greenhorns, as a rule, didn’t get in your gang, did they? That’s the point!

[02:39:36] **HOWARD:** Oh, so you were working with mostly old timers or experienced men or something?

[02:39:42] **JOE:** Well, there’s always a choice involved that you can request and select your men. Sometimes the job requires it. If you take a job that is dangerous, if you handle steel or heavy equipment, you can’t have green men. You have to have men that understand how to sling load and so forth. They know it in the hall. The dispatchers, they know who the men are.

[02:40:12] **ELSIE:** That’s another thing—certain gangs specialized in loading certain things. If you’re going to have lumber, you get such-and-such a gang. If you’re going to have steel, such-and-such a gang, and so on.

[02:40:29] **JOE:** We had lumber gangs, log gangs, paper gangs, general cargo gangs, and wheat gangs. They were all specialties. Another thing—different ships had different equipment to operate them. If you had steam

schooners, they're friction winches. If there was a gang could handle it, the dispatchers knew it. They said, well, let me see what gangs do we have. Send these gangs there, they can handle it.

[02:41:04] **HOWARD:** Suppose I came on the waterfront in 1942 for my first time, and I was looking for work. Would I be likely to be employed in a whole bunch of different gangs over the next four or five years? Is it possible I could get with a gang and stay with them for the rest of the year?

[02:41:18] **JOE:** It all depended on you.

[02:41:19] **HOWARD:** It did. On what, how good I was? Or?

[02:41:23] **JOE:** Your ability to work. Your ability to associate with the other men. The cooperation, being a human being. Really is nothing to it.

[02:41:32] **ELSIE:** Are we on tape?

[02:41:34] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:41:34] **JOE:** I'll tell you one thing. When I got into to Japan, I was walking across the country, and I couldn't speak a word Japanese. The Japanese knew nothing; they were wondering what this crazy white man was doing. I wanted some water, and I pointed it out and everything. Finally they gave me some sweet rice cakes. It stuck to my gums, and I couldn't swallow it with damn no water. Then the woman says, "Oh! Get a cup of water." I said, "That's what I wanted." It's human cooperation. People learn to associate with one another.

[02:42:08] **ELSIE:** He worked in Japan a long time before he came to this country. He had a worldly outlook that comes from the years.

[02:42:22] **HOWARD:** That's, I think, very important in understanding a lot of what goes on in the waterfront industry, really. Sailors certainly have that, and the longshoremen pick it up, too. Let me ask you about that, by the way. How many longshoremen in Local 8 were formerly seamen?

[02:42:37] **JOE:** Quite a few of them.

[02:42:37] **HOWARD:** What proportion, do you have any idea? Maybe a quarter of them? Is it possible, that much?

[02:42:43] **JOE:** Oh, when I started? Probably yes. There were fishermen, sailors, some loggers. Most of them, they were more or less connected.

[02:42:56] **HOWARD:** They were?

[02:42:56] **JOE:** Oh yes.

[02:42:56] **HOWARD:** Maybe a majority of them?

[02:42:57] **JOE:** Well, I don't know. I wouldn't say the majority. I would say 50 percent of them. In one way or another, they had some connection with sailing and fishing. Many Scandinavians. They worked in the regular gangs. Now if there was paper jobs, we had paper gangs. They were mostly local boys; they hung around the crew halls. They went down where they train, boxing, wrestling. They were swell kids, but getting them on the job and getting something done was a different story.

I don't know—I was kinda lucky in that respect. I got along with all of them. I still do.

[02:43:52] **HOWARD:** So, then, in other words, you could work steady in a gang during the war if you were an inexperienced man if you knew how to be a longshoremen, and if you got along with people. Right?

[02:44:05] **JOE:** Well, let me change it a little.

[02:44:06] **HOWARD:** Ok.

[02:44:09] **JOE:** During the war, there was plenty of work. You really had the choice of work. You could work in a steady gang in the hold if you desired to do it. But if you think that you could get a better job up on the board, well, then you went on the board. That's many of them did. It was difficult to keep a steady man in the gang unless he was in the group that he associated with, and if he knew that the gang's going to do a good job. It was difficult. It was a difficult time for the foremen and the gang leaders to get the men that they really wished to have.

[02:44:49] **HOWARD:** So, because you had the option if you wanted to of going out on the plug and trying your luck there on the board, whatever it's called—

[02:44:57] **JOE:** That's one drawback that the employers had. The new hiring hall and the freedom on the waterfront. They give the choice for a man to select his job. That's very important.

[02:45:13] **HOWARD:** Now that happened just during the war—the idea of being able to go on to the board, is that right?

[02:45:20] **JOE:** It increased. The choices were more available during the war because there was plenty of work.

[02:45:25] **HOWARD:** Ok.

[02:45:25] **ELSIE:** You were on the board when we got acquainted.

[02:45:27] **JOE:** Yes, I was because, at that time there was—

[02:45:30] **ELSIE:** That was in '44. February of '44.

[02:45:34] **HOWARD:** Why were you on the board then?

[02:45:38] **ELSIE:** Because he wanted to be!

[02:45:42] **JOE:** I don't really know now. It just was my choice—

[02:45:47] **ELSIE:** It had to do with time. If you worked with a gang, the gang was slated for certain ships or certain days. If you're on the board—

[02:46:01] **JOE:** You have more freedom. You can select the job. You can even select your overtime. Over the weekend, Sundays, and overnights you get double pay or time and a half. I think my choice would be—if there was an opening in a gang that I would like to work in, driving winch or doing something—

[02:46:30] **ELSIE:** Then you took it.

[02:46:32] **JOE:** Well, then I took it. If there wasn't, then, well, I had other choices.

[02:46:37] **HOWARD:** Overall, is this a fair statement—during the war, the composition of the gangs were a little less stable. There was greater numbers of people moving in and out of the gangs during the war.

[02:46:50] **JOE:** By choice.

[02:46:51] **HOWARD:** By choice or whatever reason. That's true. Ok. That's what I wanted to get at. So, as we say in labor studies, there was more rapid labor turnover in the gangs. You know what that term means? People coming and going.

[02:47:07] **JOE:** I don't know whether that was the main factor. There were many fellows that came just temporarily during the war. They came over here, or they make a stake, whatever it is. Get located. Maybe they had their families Back East someplace. They didn't really know what the waterfront was like. But after they stayed there for a while, learned the industry, and knew what it was all about, and the pay and the freedom—the longshore workers love the freedom. You can select the time you work. You can take off any time you want to, go on a vacation, as long as you can financially afford it. You can't do it anyplace else. As soon as the men found out all the ins and out on the waterfront, you couldn't get them out with a crowbar. They stayed there.

[02:47:58] **HOWARD:** That's true, I've heard that.

[02:48:00] **JOE:** But, when they first get in there, it's so confusing. My god, I'll get killed before I get around here.

To get a job on the waterfront out of the hiring hall, that is a trick by itself.

[02:48:14] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I imagine it was.

[02:48:16] **JOE:** They announce it with a microphone, and there's a thousand men. In 15 minutes, the hall is empty. Where did they go?

[02:48:23] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Alright. Let's move on to the post-war period. After the war, work opportunities declined. There's a surplus of men who were hired during the war. Did Local 8 experience any problems with a larger group of men than they could hire? You talked about it a little bit earlier, when you were talking about registering the extra men.

[02:48:44] **JOE:** A bit of trouble, yeah.

[02:48:46] **HOWARD:** Most of the locals seem to have had one form of trouble or another. In most locals, it was usually a group of non-whites. In L.A. it was mostly Mexicans. In San Francisco it was mostly Blacks. It's a question of how you were going to bring these people into the union, or if you were. So in Local 8, it was mostly white guys who were the extras. The question was how to deal with that problem, and you decided basically to bring them all into the union as registered longshoremen.

[02:49:10] **JOE:** We had a waiting list. We had the records—when they started as permit men, how long they worked, how much they earned. By the earned wage, you could tell by the earning. In fact, the earnings showed because they could get unemployment. That was record. The one with the longest record, you were the first when there was new membership given to a man; it was his turn.

[02:49:42] **HOWARD:** So strictly seniority? In terms of how long he'd been there.

[02:49:46] **JOE:** Something like that.

[02:49:49] **HOWARD:** What about the 1948 strike? What do you remember about that in Local 8 here?

[02:49:56] **JOE:** I think it was a strike that started about the Hawaiian situation, where they come in.

[02:50:01] **ELSIE:** You went on the strike duty, I know, after we were married.

[02:50:08] **JOE:** I didn't want any committee job then.

[02:50:13] **ELSIE:** But you went on strike duty.

[02:50:14] **JOE:** Oh, yeah, I went on the picket line, yes. I was getting pretty old by then, and I didn't want to get involved in all the fracas. It was a controversy.

[02:50:31] **ELSIE:** You better bring that to a close pretty soon. I'm going to have my drink.

[02:50:37] **HOWARD:** [laughing]

[02:50:37] **JOE:** I really don't remember how that started.

[02:50:41] **HOWARD:** Well, partly, I think in San Francisco—I'm sure it was coast-wide—the union made a wage demand. The employers said maybe. Then the issue became whether they would negotiate with a union that Bridges was in. Then the employers said, "We demand that Bridges be removed from union because he's a communist. We can't negotiate with a communist." Then it became an issue of Bridges. Then the strike was called because they essentially locked out the union. They wouldn't renew the contract as long as Bridges—

[02:51:11] **JOE:** It was something like that.

[02:51:11] **HOWARD:** —was there. But you don't remember any major incidents in Portland during the strike? It was a long strike.

[02:51:16] **JOE:** Yeah, I think the incident in Portland was. . . There was a can in The Dalles [Oregon] . They were going to ship cargo by barge from The Dalles. They had some controversy there, but I don't remember just how it was. I think it was the time when we bought a house, and I had work doing the house, so I didn't want the picket line. I didn't go.

[02:51:57] **ELSIE:** You were working on the Fortieth Street house.

[02:52:01] **JOE:** We had to repair the house. I was busy at home, so I didn't devote all the time that I could have. Otherwise I would have been probably some selected job. I'll tell you the man who really had lots of that work was a fellow by the name of [?Roland Smith?] . He was a regular lawyer. The Dalles had something to do with it.

[02:52:35] **HOWARD:** I remember reading about that. I don't remember exactly what it was. Some real big struggle over there. It was about who was going to load on a dock there. It was the Teamsters versus the longshoremen or something like that. Wasn't that it? Or, no, they diverted cargo from Portland and tried to work it over there. Local 8 sent a whole group of pickets over there to stop it. It was real violent. I remember vaguely something like that.

[02:52:59] **JOE:** I think that was The Dalles, yeah.

[02:53:00] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I remember that now.

[02:53:03] **JOE:** But I don't know that I can give you all the details on it.

[02:53:06] **HOWARD:** Well, if it's nothing you recall that clearly, I can probably check it out in books or newspapers.

[02:53:12] **ELSIE:** That Dalles episode—wasn't that when the longshoremen union was going to be sued for millions of dollars?

[02:53:23] **JOE:** The lawsuit came from that.

[02:53:25] **ELSIE:** And the pensioners put the building in their name to keep from losing it!

[02:53:36] **HOWARD:** Is that right? Huh.

[02:53:39] **ELSIE:** The pensioners own the building right now.

[02:53:42] **HOWARD:** They do?

[02:53:43] **JOE:** When the lawsuit got in progress, and the longshoremen would have been sued, and all their value, all their assets and collateral would have been put in escrow. So the regular union, they signed over the buildings, the hiring hall and everything which would be owned, into the retired group, the pensioners' name. It's still there. Then the employers, they have to pay the rent to the pensioners. It's still that way.

[02:54:23] **ELSIE:** It won't be that way when you get your new hall.

[02:54:26] **JOE:** See, there's so many conflicts coming up. I was in a committee there. The building's getting so old, and the communication system, and it's a fire trap.

[02:54:39] **HOWARD:** Yeah, same hall you've had since the thirties, isn't it?

[02:54:42] **ELSIE:** Oh, it was an old, old thing when they bought it.

[02:54:44] **JOE:** It was a church. No, we didn't have that hall in the thirties and forties.

[02:54:49] **HOWARD:** Oh, you didn't?

[02:54:50] **JOE:** No, that came later. There was a group of Swedes. It belonged to a church, and the church wanted to sell it. Oh, there was a poster—

[02:55:00] **ELSIE:** They made a hall.

[02:55:02] **JOE:** And we bought it, and made a hall out of it. I fought it to the last ditch. They finally told me—they kidded me about it. "Joe, you're not a church member." I says, "I don't want a church."

[02:55:14] **ELSIE:** It has very poor acoustics.

[02:55:17] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:55:17] **ELSIE:** Terrible.

[02:55:17] **JOE:** But at that time, it saved—we could get that building reasonably. We assessed how much money we paid for it.

[02:55:26] **ELSIE:** Oh, they'd been getting along.

[02:55:29] **JOE:** Then we had to hire a whole warehouse, by god, the rent was prohibitive.

[02:55:35] **ELSIE:** The women want to make their coffee down in the basement, and they had to use the same room that executive board's using. There's no way to heat it. We heat it with the oven!

[02:55:48] **HOWARD:** Is that right? That's primitive.

[02:55:50] **JOE:** We cut corners.

[02:55:51] **ELSIE:** That's what we've been doing.

[02:55:54] **HOWARD:** Alright, I just have a couple more questions here and I'll be done. How about in 1950—we're moving along. Two questions there. Bridges took a position on the Korean War which turned out to be very controversial. He also took a position on screening in the union which turned out to be very controversial. Do you remember any discussion of that in Local 8? The screening incident, why don't we talk about that first? Remember that? They talked about screening in off the waterfront entirely. Bridges fought it, and then a compromise was reached at a Coos Bay caucus in 1950. Do you remember?

[02:56:26] **JOE:** You mentioned that screening—what were they screened for?

[02:56:30] **HOWARD:** They were trying to screen so-called subversives off the waterfront during the Korean War. The Coast Guard was behind it.

[02:56:37] **JOE:** Oh, that was the time when the FBI closed down on the Coast Guard passes on the waterfront.

[02:56:44] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

[02:56:46] **JOE:** Then they found some of the men that signed those papers that I told you about, unknowingly. They signed the communistic affiliation, and then it backfired. Because then we handled war material. There were two or three friends of mine, they got stuck.

[02:57:06] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:57:07] **JOE:** Oh yeah.

[02:57:08] **ELSIE:** Well, was that the screening committee that you and Rosco were on?

[02:57:10] **JOE:** No. that was different. We screened the fellows that didn't really serve picket line and didn't contribute to the strike duties like they should have. If there was some kind of controversy whether they should be—because they had to be registered longshoremen. The question was, are they entitled to be a rank-and-file longshoremen if they were on the other side? That's what we screened them for.

[02:57:48] **ELSIE:** Excuse me, you said relating to the Korean War?

[02:57:53] **HOWARD:** Right, Korean War.

[02:57:56] **JOE:** That was the screening—

[02:57:58] **ELSIE:** I would like to know what position Bridges took on that. I've forgotten that.

[02:58:05] **HOWARD:** There were really three positions that were announced in the union. One was that you agreed in total with what the Coast Guard said. What the Coast Guard said is anyone who they thought was a subversive would not be allowed to work on any waterfront facility.

[02:58:18] **JOE:** See, we loaded powder.

[02:58:21] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:58:23] **JOE:** Right down the river here. Can't think of the name now—there was a powder depot. Fellows who had any kind of mark in the Coast Guard policy, they couldn't go down there.

[02:58:36] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's what eventually was arrived at. There was a compromise.

[02:58:39] **ELSIE:** Let him finish. I want to hear the rest of it.

[02:58:42] **HOWARD:** So there was that position, that they wouldn't be allowed to work on any waterfront docks at all. Then the other position was the other side, which was Bridges' original position, that you fight all screening processes like that because they're anti-union. Then, so, a compromise was worked out whereby the union said if you don't get a security pass, you can't work on military docks. But you can work on commercial docks.

[02:59:06] **JOE:** That's the final—

[02:59:07] **HOWARD:** That's the one that was arrived at. But a lot of people in the San Francisco local fought that and said, no, let's throw all the Reds out of the union entirely. That sort of a thing. Because this was during the Cold War, right? 1950.

[02:59:19] **JOE:** That must have been a bigger controversy down there than it was up here.

[02:59:22] **HOWARD:** It must have been. Because there was a big right-wing faction in the local down there.

[02:59:26] **JOE:** Must have loaded more war cargo for Korea than we did. We had very little Korean cargo here.

[02:59:31] **HOWARD:** What about Bridges' stand on the Korean War? Was that an issue?

[02:59:35] **ELSIE:** How did he stand?

[02:59:38] **HOWARD:** He stood with the United Nations, which was subversive at that time. He said, "Let's urge a cease-fire in the Korean War," which, 30 years later, makes absolute sense. At the time, they put him in jail for that.

[02:59:49] **ELSIE:** Oh.

[02:59:50] **HOWARD:** The union was saying, "Yeah, let's kill the Reds," and all that stuff.

[02:59:54] **JOE:** I think they were trying to hang something on to him. I really don't know—there was some guys over here, like some fellows that were sort of on the conservative side. They thought—

[03:00:08] **ELSIE:** We even have a few Birchites [supporters of John Birch, anti-communist] .

[03:00:10] **HOWARD:** Oh, yeah, I'm sure you do. [laughing]

[03:00:14] **JOE:** They didn't get very far.

[03:00:17] **HOWARD:** Were union elections contested in Local 8 during the early fifties? In most locals, they had what they called a right-wing slate and a left-wing slate. Or a Bridges slate and an anti-Bridges slate for running various locals. Did that ever happen here? After World War II?

[03:00:34] **JOE:** Not that openly, no.

[03:00:36] **HOWARD:** But there were sort of factions?

[03:00:38] **ELSIE:** Well, the time that [R.T.] Baker ran against Bridges.

[03:00:42] **JOE:** There was underground currents. One time there was kind of a religious group. They were trying to bring an anti-Bridges proposal. They had a man that would probably defeat Bridges for president—[inaudible] but it didn't work.

[03:01:00] **HOWARD:** Who in Local 8 was most likely to be in opposition to Bridges? Old men or young men? Did you ever think about that? Let me ask you about '34 men. Were they most likely to be loyal to Bridges, or were they most likely to be the opponents of Bridges?

[03:01:20] **JOE:** There was a division.

[03:01:22] **HOWARD:** There was? Even among the '34 men.

[03:01:24] **JOE:** There was a division—

[03:01:25] **ELSIE:** In Oregon, there's always a division.

[03:01:26] **HOWARD:** [laughing]

[03:01:27] **JOE:** In '34, most of us here up north, they didn't know who Bridges was. He was just a sailor.

[03:01:35] **HOWARD:** So '34 men were divided on Bridges, right? Some of them supported, and some of them didn't?

[END PART SIX/BEGIN PART SEVEN]

He might have been here for the '22 strike. Is that possible?

[03:01:46] **JOE:** Martin? Probably was.

[03:01:47] **HOWARD:** That would be great, to talk to him.

[03:01:53] **ELSIE:** But when you get that old, your memory isn't good. Just like our memory is going.

[03:01:53] **JOE:** God, I can't remember names. Sometimes they come back to me.

[03:02:04] **HOWARD:** Well, I'm asking you to go back sometimes 50 years in time. [laughing]

[03:02:07] **JOE:** Age does something to you.

[03:02:09] **HOWARD:** Yeah, sure. Alright, let me ask you a few more questions. '34 men were evenly divided you felt for Bridges—or were they more likely to support Bridges? Out of 100 '34 men, how would they have voted? What percentage would have supported Bridges?

[03:02:28] **JOE:** The majority would vote for him.

[03:02:29] **HOWARD:** The majority would. Just a slim majority or an overwhelmingly majority or?

[03:02:34] **JOE:** I'd say a fairly good majority.

[03:02:36] **HOWARD:** Ok. They were pro-Bridges, but there was some opposition.

[03:02:42] **ELSIE:** Oh, sure. Always.

[03:02:48] **JOE:** There were many in the dark because they didn't know who Bridges really was. But, when he conducted a general strike in San Francisco, and the courage he showed over there, that spoke for itself.

[03:03:04] **HOWARD:** What about the war babies? Around the time of the '50s. If they were asked to choose up sides between a pro-Bridges and an anti-Bridges position, how would they have gone?

[03:03:15] **JOE:** I would say the majority, if they didn't have to pay union dues, they wouldn't pay at all.

[03:03:19] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[03:03:20] **JOE:** They're that way.

[03:03:22] **ELSIE:** They're mostly the ones that just want money, no matter what you have to do with it.

[03:03:27] **JOE:** They don't know what unionism is.

[03:03:31] **HOWARD:** In terms of their support for a guy like Bridges—or, how would they have voted in a local election if given a choice—or even in an international election, if Bridges was running against that guy from Local 8. What I'm trying to figure out is who was most likely to support a guy like Bridges and who was most likely to support—what's his name? Baker? Is that his name?

[03:03:52] **JOE:** I don't know what to make of it because—

[03:03:53] **ELSIE:** More conservative people, the ones that were against communism, were for Baker, of course.

[03:04:01] **HOWARD:** But who were they?

[03:04:03] **ELSIE:** I can't tell you! [laughing]

[03:04:05] **JOE:** Jimmy Herman, when Jimmy Herman finally was nominated to be president, took Harry's place, there was a contention. There was a division, but not so much the man—you see—

[03:04:21] **ELSIE:** You're up to Jimmy Herman's time. He [Howard] is back a ways.

[03:04:27] **HOWARD:** I really want to look at the fifties as much as possible.

[03:04:32] **JOE:** There's always some opposition. But I don't think the opposition is important enough to swing the vote one way or the other.

[03:04:42] **HOWARD:** The reason I ask this question is because you said it was mostly conservatives. As a sociologist, what I do then is say what groups were the conservatives? And I get all kinds of different answers when I talk to people about this. Sometimes they tell me the Catholics tended to be a little more conservative. The white people were always more conservative than the non-white people in most of the locals I've seen. The '34 men tended to be more loyal to Bridges than the non-'34 men. These are the kinds of patterns that I see emerging.

[03:05:11] **ELSIE:** Oh, I think so.

[03:05:12] **HOWARD:** Does that seem to make sense based on what you know here in Local 8?

[03:05:15] **JOE:** To some extent. You have more Catholics down in California than we have here.

[03:05:19] **HOWARD:** That's probably true.

[03:05:20] **ELSIE:** And, by the way, you have more Mexican-type, Spanish-type people. Up here, we don't. There are many Jews in Portland.

[03:05:32] **HOWARD:** In the longshoremen, say?

[03:05:33] **ELSIE:** Well, no, in Portland. I mean.

[03:05:36] **JOE:** To my knowledge, I think we had three Jews working on the waterfront.

[03:05:44] **HOWARD:** Were they pro-Bridges guys? Or do you know?

[03:05:48] **JOE:** I think so.

[03:05:50] **HOWARD:** There were some Jews here. There are a lot of Jews working on the New York—

[03:05:53] **ELSIE:** In the business world, they are, of course.

[03:05:56] **HOWARD:** So what else can you tell me about pro-Bridges and anti-Bridges groups in the local? Any other impressions you had about who was most likely to support him? It's easy because we always make blanket statements about the conservatives did this or the liberals did this. But, in fact, there are certain groups that tend to become conservatives and certain groups that tend to become liberals.

[03:06:22] **ELSIE:** I think on this subject, that's right! I do!

[03:06:27] **JOE:** I'll tell you what is important as far as swinging the attitude from conservative or otherwise. It's the job opportunity. When the rule was made here in Portland, the Columbia River area, that a

longshoreman could transfer into Local 40 [Supercargoes and Clerks Union] and became a checker in a supercargo, that automatically swung many fellows. There was better pay, cleaner job, and that gave them the conservative idea. They must have leaned that way to begin with.

[03:07:05] **HOWARD:** When did that option become available for people, of switching into Local 40? Was that after the war?

[03:07:13] **JOE:** Just about 20 or 25 years ago.

[03:07:15] **ELSIE:** It works the other way. What's the one Budge was in?

[03:07:21] **JOE:** He's Local 40. Budgie was a walking boss.

[03:07:25] **ELSIE:** But that was 80-something?

[03:07:28] **JOE:** Local 40.

[03:07:29] **ELSIE:** No!

[03:07:30] **JOE:** 96. [sic, 94?]

[03:07:30] **ELSIE:** Oh, [?96?] . Now you got it.

[03:07:34] **JOE:** See, I could have joined the walking bosses if I wanted to a long time ago. When I got back from the mining. But I didn't want to.

[03:07:44] **HOWARD:** Why?

[03:07:47] **JOE:** All my friends, they were strikers, and they were rank-and-file longshoremen. If all of a sudden I would come down there being the boss, they would say, "What in the hell happened to Joe?" It wouldn't be right. I didn't feel comfortable.

[03:08:01] **HOWARD:** That's because you were not conservative, but, if you'd been more conservative politically, if you didn't care about the significance of the strike, you didn't care so much about the men, you probably would have done it, right?

[03:08:11] **JOE:** Many of them did.

[03:08:13] **ELSIE:** Many of our friends, friends of today, did.

[03:08:17] **JOE:** Oh, they all switched. They did.

[03:08:21] **ELSIE:** Many of the people at the party the other day—a large majority of them were from Local 40 and Local [?96?] .

[03:08:30] **JOE:** I remember they started as beginners; today they are big shots.

[03:08:34] **ELSIE:** In fact, our present president of the pensioners—

[03:08:40] **JOE:** He wasn't a longshoreman—

[03:08:41] **ELSIE:** He was a Local 40 guy.

[03:08:43] **JOE:** A supercargo.

[03:08:44] **HOWARD:** It's interesting because—is this possible? Let me ask you—that the option of going into Local 40 or Local 96 drained conservative men out of Local 8.

[03:08:55] **JOE:** You can say that.

[03:08:56] **ELSIE:** Yeah, it's possible.

[03:08:57] **HOWARD:** That's a very interesting possibility, right?

[03:08:59] **JOE:** Very likely. The attitude is there.

[03:09:05] **HOWARD:** That explains an awful lot about these locals, you know?

[03:09:08] **ELSIE:** Money speaks!

[03:09:08] **HOWARD:** Oh, I know! I know that one! So the right, or the conservatives—whatever we want to call them—we drained. When could you get into that? You said that Local 40 was available how soon?

[03:09:23] **JOE:** When that began?

[03:09:23] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and Local [?96?] .

[03:09:26] **JOE:** Well, it started before I retired. See, I retired in '61.

[03:09:31] **ELSIE:** [?Jack Branahan?] could give you a lot of data.

[03:09:35] **HOWARD:** Those locals weren't created during the early forties or something? I thought they were created right after the war.

[03:09:41] **JOE:** No, before this rule was made, men could not transfer. There was some possibility if he had a father or a relative or something. With the request of the employers, you could probably switch. The walking bosses—Local 40 was a regular. They had a charter. But the walking bosses, which is 96, they were a kind of preferred list from the employers. They were a different category of animals.

[03:10:16] **ELSIE:** Were they formed later, then?

[03:10:23] **JOE:** Yeah, they eventually were taken in the union, but they were really made by employers. Walking boss, he was an employer's man. The supercargo and the checker, they work for the ship and the whole thing.

[03:10:38] **ELSIE:** Budgie would turn over in his grave if he heard you say that! [laughing]

[03:10:41] **JOE:** He knew it! How could he make \$80, \$90, \$100 a night if he didn't?

[03:10:47] **ELSIE:** Yeah, they got good money.

[03:10:48] **HOWARD:** I know. You know what an average longshoreman makes today? Guess.

[03:10:54] **JOE:** Today?

[03:10:55] **HOWARD:** Per year.

[03:10:55] **JOE:** About \$25-26,000?

[03:10:57] **HOWARD:** PMA says \$35,000.

[03:11:02] **ELSIE:** That's an ordinary longshoreman?

[03:11:04] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and a walking boss is \$45,000. Then who's the guy on top?

[03:11:08] **JOE:** The supercargo.

[03:11:09] **HOWARD:** The clerk, the supercargo? \$55,000. Not too bad.

[03:11:13] **JOE:** Most of our friends, they're all on the bottom.

[03:11:16] **ELSIE:** But friends that we associate with.

[03:11:20] **JOE:** They were all down there. I broke them in, two or three guys, in the gang when they started as permit men. Today, they are walking bosses and supercargoes.

[03:11:31] **ELSIE:** Joe was asked to speak at this party the other day. But funny things happen at a party that is planned by maybe some younger people that were never here during '34. They assumed that every older person was in the '34 strike. Which he was not. They were shocked.

[03:11:57] **JOE:** Lots of them that say they're old timers, and I know damn well they weren't there. They couldn't have been!

[03:12:02] **ELSIE:** In the list of being in the '34 strike, publicly they were announced that they were. Joe knows definitely that they were not. But we don't say anything. You don't say anything.

[03:12:18] **JOE:** I don't want to ruin the evening.

[03:12:18] **HOWARD:** Wasn't there some kind of brass rings or something like that? No?

[03:12:21] **ELSIE:** [laughing]

[03:12:22] **HOWARD:** No? They do in San Francisco, I think!

[03:12:25] **ELSIE:** What?

[03:12:26] **HOWARD:** Some kind of brass identification mark by their name. Their plug is brass, is that is?

[03:12:30] **ELSIE:** Oh, really?

[03:12:31] **HOWARD:** I think so.

[03:12:31] **ELSIE:** Well, if they were in the strike—

[03:12:33] **JOE:** We've got different plugs for key men.

[03:12:38] **HOWARD:** I remember [?Rohatch?] was talking about how you could know the '34 men because they all had brass something or others. I thought it was a plug.

[03:12:43] **JOE:** They may have it.

[03:12:47] **HOWARD:** So let me ask you one question about it because I'm a little unclear. During the fifties, if you wanted to become a walking boss, you couldn't transfer then from Local 8 to Local 40 or 96, is that right? It only happened afterwards, in 1960?

[03:13:01] **JOE:** I don't know exactly. I wouldn't set the date on it. But it came. . .

[03:13:05] **HOWARD:** Because, see, in Local 13, I think that happened right after the war. They set up a separate local for the walking bosses. What that means, then, is at the height of McCarthyism, when the Cold War's surging, a lot of right wingers probably said, "To hell with this left-wing outfit. I'm going to become a walking boss," and they were the right wingers anyway." So it allowed a guy like Bridges in the left wing leadership to hold a base in the union. Does that make sense?

[03:13:36] **JOE:** That wouldn't apply here.

[03:13:40] **HOWARD:** It wouldn't apply here.

[03:13:40] **JOE:** No, no, no. Here, see that's the reason I didn't want to take the walking boss job. Because I didn't want to be even assumed that I was an employer's man.

[03:13:53] **ELSIE:** He didn't want to be classed with them.

[03:13:55] **HOWARD:** I can understand that. Because you were more progressive than the rest of these guys.

[03:14:00] **JOE:** I consider myself a rank-and-file man. I didn't suffer by it.

[03:14:06] **ELSIE:** But there have been times when Bridges just was not welcome up here. One time, they even put him out.

[03:14:13] **JOE:** They refused him in a meeting.

[03:14:14] **HOWARD:** When was that?

[03:14:15] **ELSIE:** In a meeting years ago.

[03:14:15] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that around the racial thing? Is that possible? In the mid-sixties?

[03:14:25] **JOE:** Well, it was mostly all the younger generation, you know. They didn't like Harry Bridges. We had a time here when all the young Turks—we call them "young Turks"—when somebody says we did in '34 this, and '34 that—that was dynamite. They didn't like that.

[03:14:45] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that right?

[03:14:45] **JOE:** Oh, yeah. They were opposed to it.

[03:14:48] **ELSIE:** Kind of rubs their feathers the wrong way.

[03:14:50] **JOE:** They thought they made the union here.

[03:14:53] **HOWARD:** How young are the young Turks? Are we talking about the war babies or people even younger than them?

[03:14:59] **JOE:** Well, war babies and after the war babies. Mostly relatives of the older longshoremen. Their sons and their friends.

[03:15:09] **ELSIE:** Like [?Pritch?] . He brought to mind something peculiar. An old man who is still living was an active '34 strike person. Had two sons. His two sons have been very active in the union, but they both are top-rank men, officers. Both of them. But they have a different line of thinking than their old father. They're more modern in their thinking. They go along with modern ideas. They're wonderful people. One of them—well, I won't mention names. They're all good friends.

We have friends every place, on all sides of the fence.

[03:16:12] **JOE:** I even have a couple of friends that are Black fellows now from San Francisco.

[03:16:16] **ELSIE:** Yeah, I've got pictures of him with his arm around some Black guy!

[03:16:21] **JOE:** He was a big Presbyterian. Used to mix whiskey and alcohol. I don't have trouble getting acquainted with people. Hell's bells, they're all human beings.

[03:16:33] **HOWARD:** Yeah. I mean, when I go back and read the papers and the election slates from the fifties, there was an awful lot of intense hostility, certainly in Local 10. They had what they called their "blue slate," and they had their Bridges slate. They were name calling, and it got real nasty.

[03:16:51] **ELSIE:** Local 10 had some—

[03:16:52] **JOE:** See, there was always a differential between San Francisco and Oakland [California] . Oh god, going back and forth. They had a war down there.

But, listen, since we're on the subject, you're going to study—maybe you'll be influential, a young man. You know what this nation needs? A change in Congress not to be so much influenced by the lobbies. That lobbying and the laws there are does not fit a democratic nation like the United States.

[03:17:24] **HOWARD:** I agree precisely.

[03:17:26] **ELSIE:** May I add to that? They need—

[03:17:28] **JOE:** How we're going to change it? I don't know. Something should be done.

[03:17:39] **ELSIE:** They need a representative of labor.

[03:17:39] **HOWARD:** That's what I was going to say. They need a labor party in this country.

[03:17:42] **ELSIE:** And they need a representative of labor because it's seems like everybody's against labor.

[03:17:51] **HOWARD:** Yeah, labor is on hard times now, no question about it.

[03:17:56] **ELSIE:** It's very hard times.

[03:17:56] **JOE:** No kidding.

[03:17:58] **HOWARD:** A lot of it's their own fault. They haven't been imaginative. They're in the same old rut they were in before. They're parroting the same line. Young workers don't want to hear that anymore. They want, I think, the labor movement to recapture the vision it had when it was in the CIO days, when it was a force for changing the world and making it better for people to live in. Instead of just the building trades or something—they're the classic, and the Teamsters—they just grab more for their own individual selfish little group. Who can support an institution like that? You have a hard time.

[03:18:28] **ELSIE:** By the way, speaking of the Teamsters—

[03:18:32] **JOE:** It's eroded from the top.

[03:18:32] **HOWARD:** Precisely.

[03:18:32] **ELSIE:** I've got a picture of [Jimmy] Hoffa and his wife in there. What do you think about Hoffa? Do you think he's as guilty as they make him out?

[03:18:45] **HOWARD:** No, not by a long stretch. Not at all. Remember, he was sent to jail for an attempt to bribe a juror on a case that was flimsy to begin with. The original case was a total scam.

[03:18:57] **JOE:** [?Bobby Baker?] put him to jail.

[03:18:59] **HOWARD:** That's right. Hoffa, from what I read, wasn't such a bad guy. He was kind of a humble rank-and-filer.

[03:19:04] **JOE and ELISE:** That's right.

[03:19:05] **HOWARD:** He lived in a working class community his whole life.

[03:19:07] **JOE:** I was in a meeting when he was told—

[03:19:10] **ELSIE:** I'm glad to hear you say that.

[03:19:10] **JOE:** He was a liked man. He could get over to the people. But that Frank Fitzsimmons?

[03:19:16] **HOWARD:** Oh, he's a jerk. And now, the guy they got in now, [Roy Lee] Williams? Williams is the new guy; he's even worse. He makes Fitzsimmons look like an angel.

[03:19:22] **JOE:** No kidding.

[03:19:22] **ELSIE:** Oh really?

[03:19:23] **HOWARD:** Oh, yeah.

[03:19:24] **ELSIE:** I don't know him.

[03:19:24] **HOWARD:** I got thrown out of the Teamsters union once when I was in it. I was trying to organize just to get people to go to the union meeting. They threw me out of the union for that. [laughs] Great union they got.

[03:19:36] **ELSIE:** Well, you know, it's come to a bad time when you have to fine the union members for not showing up.

[03:19:45] **HOWARD:** Exactly. That's right.

[03:19:47] **ELSIE:** That's a bad time.

[03:19:48] **JOE:** Will you have a drink?

[03:19:48] **HOWARD:** In a minute, yeah. Let me ask you one or two more questions, and then we'll be done. We can put this behind. It's a lot easier.

[03:19:53] **JOE:** Well, let's get that over with.

[03:19:54] **HOWARD:** Ok. Let's see if there's anything else. Let me just scan my 10 pages of questions and see if I left anything out. I don't think so. . . Well, I guess the final question, and I can ask both of you this is how do you explain the fact that Bridges was able to survive as long as he did?

[03:20:20] **ELSIE:** He's honest.

[03:20:21] **JOE:** His honesty and he's rank-and-file. He does not believe in giving orders from the top.

[03:20:26] **ELSIE:** Honest and fairness.

[03:20:27] **JOE:** When it comes to the final decision, he says, "Let's take it to the vote, what the rank-and-file says." Many times when it came down to a very decisive point, well, he says, "Let's take a roll call vote." On the floor or anything. If the majority voted, that's it—no argument.

[03:20:46] **HOWARD:** But I can cite so many instances when he really violated the spirit of that, like the Goldblatt situation.

[03:20:53] **JOE:** Well—

[03:20:54] **HOWARD:** Was that something that just happened later in his life pretty much?

[03:20:59] **JOE:** I heard two or three different angles about that Louis Goldblatt situation.

[03:21:04] **HOWARD:** But that's just one. I could cite—I talked to five guys in Local 10, people that I trust and who seem like honest unionists, who they would stand up in a meeting and criticize Bridges for something. He'd start making wild accusations about how they were CIA agents, or they were sent in here as wreckers from another union. That wasn't true! That's hardly integrity to me.

[03:21:27] **ELSIE:** [laughing] He pulled some mean tricks sometimes. Now, for instance, I remember when there was a big squabble in Local 10 about voting rights. Bridges was against the voting rights.

[03:21:42] **JOE:** But there was money involved.

[03:21:44] **ELSIE:** Henry Schmidt was for the voting rights. And it still goes on.

[03:21:51] **HOWARD:** Right, Schmidt—and you know [?Bjorn Halling?] ? Does that name mean anything to you?

[03:21:56] **JOE:** When they were going to sell the hall, and then how are we going to divide the kitty?

[03:21:58] **HOWARD:** Those guys were principled. To me, a guy like [?Bjorn Halling?] , I've looked at what he's had to do. He's seems like one of the most principled guys in the whole union. After a while, he couldn't stomach Bridges anymore. He's openly split with him. Schmidt had a lot of problems with Bridges. Still does. [Germain] Bulcke has some—he won't say it on tape. But I've heard what Bulcke's had to say to other people behind his back.

[03:22:20] **ELSIE:** Bulcke is more—he's careful what he says.

[03:22:26] **HOWARD:** He's very cautious. But the fact is that there's guys—I don't know, see, Bridges isn't that great, I'm beginning to think. I mean, he—you people have more integrity than Bridges! Right?

[03:22:37] **JOE:** I asked a woman one time—

[03:22:38] **ELSIE:** [laughing] I don't know!

[03:22:40] **JOE:** I didn't get the question.

[03:22:41] **HOWARD:** I think you have more integrity than Bridges. I think an awful lot of people who tell me how great Bridges was, how honest he was, are much more honest than Bridges ever was. That's my impression. In the late fifties when he was negotiating the mechanization agreement, and he's palling around with St. Sure all the time and making jokes about selling out the longshoremen—I'll tell you something off the record—

[BREAK IN THE RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

[03:23:02] **JOE:** Sooner or later, it will crop out. But it's hard to digest. Then you have to weigh now—are you for or are you against it? That's probably some of the difficulties that he had. But what his success—I don't know!

[03:23:20] **HOWARD:** [laughing]

[03:23:20] **ELSIE:** Joe and I are people that make up our minds each time on a particular subject. I have a very bad idea pretending to be placed in a class. These people do such and such, and these people do such and such.

[03:23:45] **JOE:** You don't want to be fenced in.

[03:23:46] **ELSIE:** I'm independent! I don't want to go along with what all this class does or all this class does. I'm going to think myself and do what I think is best on that particular subject. He's that way, too.

[03:24:07] **JOE:** When we first got acquainted, she was a very unusual person. But there were certain things I liked about her. One time, she really expressed herself the way she felt. I observed, and I said, "You know, honey, I love for that." She looked at me so! [laughing]

[03:24:27] **HOWARD:** [laughing]

[03:24:30] **JOE:** She said, "That's the reason you married me? Because I fight with you!" It's the positions to being right—

[03:24:38] **ELSIE:** And, by the way, everybody that knows Joe and Elsie Werner knows that we do argue quite a lot!

[03:24:48] **HOWARD:** There's nothing wrong with that. You've got to air your opinions.

Maybe that is part of the answer in Bridges, too, because, even though he rode roughshod over people, he did it with such conviction that you had to sort of believe in the guy.

[03:25:02] **JOE:** That's the point.

[03:25:03] **ELSIE:** That's the point.

[03:25:04] **HOWARD:** That may be it, yeah.

[03:25:06] **JOE:** I don't quite understand the way he flips, you know? He has a certain—I call it obsession—or certain belief in him that is dogmatic, and he sticks to it.

[03:25:20] **ELSIE:** Did you ever hear his wife speak?

[03:25:23] **HOWARD:** I haven't even seen his wife.

[03:25:24] **ELSIE:** Oh, if you ever hear a little—

[03:25:27] **HOWARD:** Nikki? [Noriko Sawada]

[03:25:29] **ELSIE:** Nikki, she can win you over.

[03:25:32] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[03:25:33] **JOE:** Oh yeah.

[03:25:33] **ELSIE:** I'll tell you, she's a wonderful person.

[03:25:35] **HOWARD:** Really? Well, I don't get any of the magnetism from Bridges, you know? It's weird.

[03:25:43] **ELSIE:** I had to laugh at what she said after they both went over to that foreign country to get shots to make them younger.

[03:25:53] **HOWARD:** They did?

[03:25:53] **ELSIE:** Oh, sure they did!

[03:25:55] **HOWARD:** To get young shots? Are you serious?

[03:25:58] **ELSIE:** Of course I'm serious!

[03:26:00] **HOWARD:** I didn't know that.

[03:26:01] **ELSIE:** It was in the paper.

[03:26:03] **JOE:** She has to!

[03:26:04] **ELSIE:** She said when she came back, “We all went over there to the doctor and bared our bottoms.” [all laugh] They got shots to be younger, that’s right.

[03:26:17] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Really? I never heard about that one.

[03:26:19] **ELSIE:** And I’m not just sure which country. It seems to me like it was Czechoslovakia or something.

[03:26:25] **JOE:** No, it was Yugoslavia, on the Mediterranean someplace.

[03:26:25] **HOWARD:** Yeah. That’s funny.

[03:26:25] **ELSIE:** Someplace over there that they went to the doctor. But I had to laugh at this. Nikki, she’s a cute person. See, now he has, I think, a daughter by her. But then he has a son and daughter by the former [wife] . I’ve got their pictures in there, too.

[03:26:53] **HOWARD:** Well, let me ask you the final question, which is can you recommend anyone else in Portland that I can talk to that would be as informed as you people are? Or almost?

[03:27:01] **JOE:** Here in Portland?

[03:27:02] **ELSIE:** Yes. Jack Branahan.

[03:27:02] **JOE:** Oh, yeah, he may help you, but his attitude may probably be entirely different than ours.

[03:27:13] **ELSIE:** Well, he’s Local—

[03:27:14] **HOWARD:** That’s ok.

[03:27:15] **ELSIE:** Local 40.

[03:27:17] **HOWARD:** Oh. I’d really like someone from Local 8.

[03:27:17] **ELSIE:** But the only other one I would think of is Ernie, but Ernie’s gone. He’s not responsible anymore.

[03:27:30] **JOE:** He had a stroke, and that affected his mind.

[03:27:32] **HOWARD:** What about this guy you said who’s 93? Is he coherent?

[03:27:36] **ELSIE:** Oh heavens, I don’t know!

[03:27:37] **JOE:** Who?

[03:27:37] **HOWARD:** The guy you said who’s 93 who might be in the ‘22 strike.

[03:27:42] **JOE:** Oh, [?Martin Roland?] . I don’t even know where he lives.

[03:27:47] **ELSIE:** Probably he’s so old that he wouldn’t remember.

[03:27:50] **JOE:** He’s pretty old. I know he’s very hard of hearing.

[03:27:51] **HOWARD:** Oh, he is?

[03:27:55] **JOE:** He came and paid his union dues, and I talked to him.

[03:28:00] **HOWARD:** Do you think he could remember stuff from 1922, or would that be expecting a lot?

[03:28:06] **JOE:** Well, I'll tell you, old Martin, he was just a longshoreman. That's all. I don't know his line of thinking, his philosophy, his concepts, his aptitude and attitude. I couldn't tell you anything about it.

[03:28:21] **HOWARD:** Sometimes, see, the problem is I've been talking to the more intellectual guys among the longshoremen. I'd like to talk to an ordinary guy if that was. . .

[03:28:27] **ELSIE:** Well, do you even know how to spell his name? Or how we would get him?

[03:28:31] **JOE:** Give me time; it will come. Martin Roland, or Nolan. . .I have to get the book. . .

[03:28:36] **ELSIE:** Roland?

[03:28:37] **HOWARD:** Is there someone else you can think of before you get up? As long as I've got you on tape here.

[03:28:42] **ELSIE:** Well, I suggested [?Jack Branahan?] but he's Local 40. He's a very competent person and knows about—

[03:28:52] **JOE:** He may have some records because he was secretary.

[03:28:54] **ELSIE:** He'd have records.

[03:28:55] **HOWARD:** He was secretary of Local 40, though?

[03:28:59] **ELSIE:** Was.

[03:29:00] **JOE:** He was secretary of Local 40.

[03:29:01] **ELSIE:** He's retired now.

[03:29:02] **HOWARD:** I'd like to stick with Local 8 if possible.

[03:29:03] **JOE:** If [?Rosie was alive?] , he had records, but he died.

[03:29:04] **ELSIE:** Yeah, [?Rosie?] 's passed.

[03:29:06] **JOE:** He was a dispatcher.

[03:29:06] **ELSIE:** You see, most of the old timers are gone.

[03:29:06] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I know.

[03:29:06] **JOE:** He was my partner on the winches, and then—see, we can only serve one year as an officer, and then we have to change off. [?Rosie?] , he would—

[03:29:32] **ELSIE:** What about old Pat?

[03:29:39] **JOE:** Well, now old Pat may surprise you. [laughing] That Old Irishman! I don't know how his mind would be. He's old. I know he was here in '34. He used to work in an oil gang.

[03:29:59] **ELSIE:** Can't even think of his last name.

[03:30:01] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Be a little hard to find him.

[03:30:04] **ELSIE:** But I could find out.

[03:30:07] **JOE:** If you give me time, it will come to me. But if you spring it on me—

[03:30:12] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[03:30:12] **ELSIE:** He's an old Irishman that—we have a joint across the street from the hall down there. And we always used to—

[03:30:23] **JOE:** Adrian! Pat Adrian.

[03:30:24] **ELSIE:** Pat Adrian, that's right. A-D-R-I-A-N, Adrian.

[03:30:29] **JOE:** I knew I was going to get it! [laugh]

[03:30:30] **ELSIE:** Good for you! Anyway, Pat—am I on tape?

[03:30:36] **HOWARD:** Yeah, it's ok.

[03:30:44] **ELSIE:** What I was going to say, [laughing] I don't want to say on tape.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

[03:30:48] **JOE:** We had a conversation slip on what is what.

[03:30:50] **HOWARD:** I know. See, I got a grant for this research, and I forgot to write in money for transcription, someone to transcribe the tapes. Because it's a big undertaking. This goes on for. . .

[03:31:01] **JOE:** Well, you better have a drink; otherwise—

[03:31:02] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Yeah!

[03:31:03] **JOE:** More than ever.

[03:31:04] **ELSIE:** Well, you can wait a minute, can't you?

[03:31:07] **HOWARD:** Well, we can just do a little toast here. To the ILWU! That's excellent wine. What is this?

[03:31:19] **ELSIE:** That's Colony—

[03:31:22] **JOE:** Martin Rhine.

[03:31:22] **ELSIE:** No, it is not. It's Colony. . .

[03:31:26] **HOWARD:** Rhineskeller Moselle.

[03:31:30] **JOE:** Yeah, Moselle.

[03:31:30] **HOWARD:** That's great!

[03:31:32] **ELSIE:** I think it's good.

[03:31:37] **HOWARD:** Oh, boy, now I gotta write all this up. That's the problem. I've been studying this industry for about three years.

[END PART SEVEN/BEGIN PART EIGHT]

This is an interview with Joe and Elsie Werner in Portland, Oregon on July 15, 1985. Why don't you spell your name to see if we're picking up the volume here?

[03:31:59] **JOE:** I didn't realize—you know time goes so doggone fast—that it was July 15, 1985.

[03:32:03] **HOWARD:** I know.

[03:32:04] **JOE:** What time was it when we met last time?

[03:32:06] **HOWARD:** I think it was about—well, I can tell you exactly. It was December 14th, 1981. Four years.

[03:32:12] **JOE:** Now you want evidence, something about 1934 or '35!

[03:32:19] **HOWARD:** Going back 50 years in your memory—that shouldn't be any problem. [laughing]

[BREAK IN THE RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

[03:32:24] **JOE:** I've got questions about the big view we're going to operate on.

[03:32:29] **HOWARD:** I'll give you the big picture. What I'm going to look at today real briefly is just the role of the 1934 strike, and especially the role of violence in sort of welding the men together as a unit. That's the argument I'm making in my study. I'll ask you some specific questions about this. Basically, what I'm arguing is that the violence that surrounded the '34 strike held the '34 men together for many, many years.

[03:32:53] **JOE:** That was a big part of it.

[03:32:55] **HOWARD:** Those were the guys who basically ended up supporting Bridges. Bridges emerged out of that strike; they identified with Bridges. So I'm just going to ask you a whole bunch of questions about the role of violence and what impact it had on people's minds and the way they looked at each other. Things like that.

So, before we get into that, let's just briefly get back to the very beginning of the strike, if you can remember how it developed? I know there was a lot of violence and confrontations that took place in Portland. Why don't you tell me a little bit about how it developed.

[03:33:23] **JOE:** You mean how the violence really began?

[03:33:25] **HOWARD:** Yeah. In the early stages of the strike.

[03:33:30] **JOE:** Well, the way I would proceed to explain is this way—first, there was very, very little doubt that this ‘34 strike would be successful. Because the group that had been in the ‘22 strike—and I worked with them personally—they explained it in a reasonable way that it was almost impossible. You can’t just change things over.

One day, I went down to the hall. It was a hall on Ninth and Everett. We used to have [?port?] there on Ninth and Everett. Of course, it was a company hall. Supposed to be maintained by the employers. Naturally there was a big congregation of people inside and out. We were all curious to see just what’s going to happen. Whether we would be successful, eventful, or what. First thing you know, there was a congregation of men right across the street from the hall. They were all gathering around a police car. Before we knew, they dumped the car over. I said, “Uh oh.” Whatever it was, the police must have made some kind of effort to tell the people to go home or whatever it was, and they just didn’t like it. When that commotion started and was successful in dumping the car and disturbing the police, that’s when it started. All of a sudden, everybody got rebellious. That’s our game; let’s proceed; let’s stay with it. That’s the first impression I got.

[03:35:38] **HOWARD:** That was like in the early stages of the strike, I assume?

[03:35:40] **JOE:** That was the first day of the strike.

[03:35:42] **HOWARD:** Ok, like in May or something like that. May ninth, maybe? I think that’s when the strike began, if I’m not mistaken.

[03:35:52] **JOE:** Ah, whatever it was—

[03:35:52] **HOWARD:** Ok, ok.

[03:35:52] **JOE:** Right in the beginning, before really the strike. Then, the next episode was they were sending the strikebreakers and organizers—you know what they’re called? Special police. Imported them from eastern Oregon or wherever it was. They recruited them, or they congregated them, in Oak Street, in the police station. That really came later.

Now there were certain instances. First place—I’ll tell you the incident on the McCormick dock. The McCormick dock was right across from the union station depot. Somehow, there must have been some anti-labor or anti-union demonstration on the dock. Naturally, the men wanted to go in there, and the police said no. What happened? They put those new strikebreaking policeman as the watchman there. Now, the guys said, “Oh, boy, I’m going to get that guy.” So then two or three guys grabbed the guard and threw him in the river! Again, that was enthusiasm, don’t you see?

Well, there was a lot of success. One thing and another. In a week’s time, god, we were organized all over the Portland waterfront from Oregon City clear down to the ocean. It just went like wildfire because there was a reason, there was a purpose. But on the other side, Mayor [Joseph] Carson—he was at that time the mayor—he was angry of course. He moved in with police force, firearms, machine guns. He was going to break the strike.

[03:37:59] **HOWARD:** What did you think? Was that the first time you had confronted, like on a picket line, people with guns on the other side? Had you experienced that before?

[03:38:08] **JOE:** The police force made the attempt to break the strike with firearms. Openly. I know I was on the picket line where the sheriff’s department—they had those big guns. The guy, a big fat guy, he come and

held that gun right against my belly. It was in the summertime; I could feel that cold muzzle. But I tried to look in his eyes, but he was looking someplace else. It gives you a kind of funny feeling when they come down there with the gun at your belly button. That's the way it was!

[03:38:49] **HOWARD:** Why was he holding the gun at your belly?

[03:38:51] **JOE:** To push us back!

[03:38:52] **HOWARD:** Oh, pushing you back. So you were in a picket line and they were—

[03:38:55] **JOE:** It was in St. John's, and they had it blocked off right from the city of St. John's clear to Terminal Four. They had all the strikebreakers down at Terminal Four. Naturally, we wanted to go down there and see what was going on, but the cops wouldn't let us. So the cops had a line right across the street, cars and everything, and we would come from outside through the garbage bins to get down there and see what the score was. I was standing right there in the road, and the cop comes out. There was the shotgun with the gun against my belly button. But what are you going to do? You can't force us back; you have to retreat. That's all there is to it.

[03:39:44] **HOWARD:** What was going through your mind when they did that?

[03:39:46] **JOE:** To be honest with you, I don't recollect right now. I was watching the other fellows. I thought, "Well, here goes nothing." I didn't believe that he would pull the trigger, but who knows? If he was irritated or agitated, who knows? He probably would have. I never thought about the pain involved. I didn't at the time, I believe. But it's scary.

[03:40:18] **HOWARD:** I want to just ask you again, and maybe these are silly questions, but why weren't you scared? When you were standing there and had a gun to your stomach? Or were you scared?

[03:40:28] **JOE:** I don't think it was really that I was scared. I was observing all the other men, how they responded to the effort of the police to hold us back. When I saw their courage, their advancement—see, they had to back up. We had to give back and forth. Sooner or later, somebody had to give. The police would give; they were clear up to the fence. We got possession of St. John's. Those were encouraging things. But the main encouraging thing, after we had a picket line established and the strike was really in progress, through the maintenance of the people without work. We got the best support from the small grocery people, farmers, anybody. They gave us food, and we distributed it through our efforts, through our union hall. I'm telling you—that was big, that we had the support of the people. That's what counted.

[03:41:31] **HOWARD:** I remember reading in one of the Portland, Oregonian newspaper accounts; they had your name in it. You had been arrested in one of the incidents.

[03:41:38] **JOE:** [laughing] Several times.

[03:41:40] **HOWARD:** Were you arrested several times? What was the nature of the arrest? Do you remember?

[03:41:49] **JOE:** Well, one time I was arrested, we were trying to break up some scabs, those police force that were down, and it was right across the street from the police station. I noticed that one of those guys, two fellows and a policeman, they went in the store to buy guns. I went to see what they were going to buy. So I went right down up to the store, and I was peeking to see what was going on. They were looking at guns. Handguns. Pretty soon, the cop says, "Hey, what are you doing here?" Then the manager of the store, he came

out, and he didn't know who I was. He made a pass at me, and I let him have it. We had a fight. I lost my cap. On my cap, I had my buttons. [all laugh] So they knew I was an ILA member. That's what it was at that time.

[03:42:51] **ELSIE:** You really left your address!

[03:42:54] **HOWARD:** You sure did.

[03:42:54] **JOE:** But, anyway, so then when the cops, whenever they came running out of the police station, I took off running down Fourth Street. People trying to stumble or one thing or another because when you're chased by the police, you don't get the advantage. But I saw a door open in a furniture store, so I went in there. I said, "Well, that's going to be the first salvation." So I was arrested. I was brought down to the police station for investigation. When they found out who I was, well, they took my name, but right then the lawyer showed up. That was our support. So, I was released. That's all there was to it. As soon as I got on the picket line, I had a chance to get arrested again.

It really came to court, and that was funny proceedings. It came before the judge. I was standing right here. There was a another guy here. There was a guy, the store owner who sold the guns. Judge was asking him—he says, "Did Werner hit you?" "Yeah." And he had a badge on his eye. He says, "Take it off, I want to see." I was curious. Oh, it was the nicest shiner you ever saw. I had to laugh! The judge turned to me and grinned. He said, I think, 60 days or something like that, and it's dismissed. I thought, Is that all? I got a kick, looking at the shiner. Then the guy—I know him better now—he said, "My god, Joe, if I had known you were a longshoreman, I would never have hit you." I said, "Why the hell did you come out in the first place?" That's the way it was.

[03:44:50] **HOWARD:** So did you actually have to do 60 days then?

[03:44:55] **JOE:** Oh, no, that was just. . . It was suspended.

[03:44:56] **HOWARD:** Oh, it was suspended.

[03:44:57] **JOE:** Somehow, I never got any. Never heard of it afterwards.

[03:45:02] **HOWARD:** Did you participate in the events around July fifth here in Portland? When they tried to open the port here in Portland? Do you remember that? On July fifth, along the coast, the employers tried to open the port.

[03:45:18] **JOE:** That was down in San Francisco.

[03:45:19] **HOWARD:** I think it was here, too. I think it was in all the ports.

[03:45:25] **JOE:** Oh, I think you mean—

[03:45:27] **HOWARD:** Somebody got shot.

[03:45:28] **JOE:** I think you mean the incident at Terminal Four.

[03:45:30] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think so.

[03:45:31] **JOE:** When they tried to back the—I wasn't right at the incident when it happened, when the shooting took place. I was on another assignment. We used to be divided in squads.

[03:45:46] **HOWARD:** What was your squad assignment? Do you remember?

[03:45:48] **JOE:** 54.

[03:45:49] **HOWARD:** 54?

[03:45:50] **JOE:** Yeah. 54. The squad leader was [?Benny Farro?] . There was [?Benny Farro?] , there was me, [?Clarence Fritz?] , think there was [?Mark?] —

[03:46:09] **HOWARD:** You still remember these names! You still remember the names of these people?

[03:46:13] **JOE:** Sure, I just told you.

[03:46:18] **HOWARD:** What kind of assignments did you do on these squads? What was the nature of your activities?

[03:46:25] **JOE:** The flying squads, we had to go when there was special—

[03:46:31] **HOWARD:** These were the flying squads, then, is that what they were?

[03:46:32] **JOE:** The flying squads.

[03:46:34] **HOWARD:** Tell me what they did.

[03:46:37] **JOE:** It was necessary to do some dirty work! [laughing] Well, I wouldn't call it dirty work. We had many obligations. Like at nights, the strikebreakers had congregated places where they come in and are picked up by riverboats or by squad cars or police cars. Brought down to the [?Benson?] tell them where to work. That's where they were working. We had to find out where they get off the jobs or get on the jobs. So we could handle when they were in small cliques. You couldn't start a big ruckus, you know, and then win. You just get them on a smaller scale. That was our job to find out and gage what the situation is. That was our job. Or when we had trouble on the picket line. For instance, something get up there. The flying squad are ordered to go down there just like the police was, you know? They had to go down there and take care of it.

[03:47:53] **HOWARD:** How many flying squads were there? Do you have any idea in Portland? Was everyone in a flying squad, or were they voluntary?

[03:47:59] **JOE:** Oh, no, no. . . Oh, four or five.

[03:48:12] **HOWARD:** Four or five flying squads. And they were people who were most active or interested in joining them? Is that how it works?

[03:48:18] **JOE:** Active and reliable and that you could trust. And daring. You have to confidence to do it; that's always good.

[03:48:27] **HOWARD:** How many guys were in your flying squad? About five or six, is that what you said?

[03:48:31] **JOE:** The number of flying squads?

[03:48:33] **HOWARD:** The number of guys in your flying squad. You were giving the names once.

[03:48:37] **JOE:** [?Benny?] , myself, [?Mark?] , [?Fritz?] . . .Five. Who was the other guy? Can't think of the name now.

[03:48:48] **HOWARD:** Five or six then, huh?

[03:48:50] **JOE:** Five, there were five of us.

[03:48:51] **HOWARD:** Alright. Let me ask you another sort of question. Have you ever served in combat in the military?

[03:48:58] **JOE:** Four years.

[03:48:59] **HOWARD:** During World War I?

[03:49:01] **ELSIE:** That was in Germany.

[03:49:02] **JOE:** World War I.

[03:49:03] **HOWARD:** Ok. how would you compare that experience to the experience that you had as a flying squad member?

[03:49:07] **JOE:** No comparison at all.

[03:49:09] **HOWARD:** Ok, why?

[03:49:12] **JOE:** World War I was an organized trench war. It was a trench, reinforced, whether by waterway or canal or whatever it was—canal in my case—and then they had the four posts, the reserve trench, and the trench in reserve. They were all verified with all the men and machine guns out. I was a machine gun man. No comparison at all.

[03:49:51] **HOWARD:** If we leave aside the trenches and how the thing was actually conducted, what about your feelings when you went on these flying squad missions? Did you feel a sense that you were entering in combat or something like that at all?

[03:50:07] **JOE:** It wasn't that way at all. Sometimes you thought about how lucky you were. You had confidence that luck was on your side. But there was a purpose. By instinct, you had to do something to preserve what you had. It was a matter of survival. The '34 strike was really a battle for survival. If the strike were lost, I don't know what would have happened.

[03:50:43] **HOWARD:** The reason I ask these questions is because a lot of people, when they talk about the '34 strike, they talk about it almost like a war. They'll use even terms like that you would use to describe a war. They'll talk about the battles they engaged in, the conflicts, the struggles. They'll use a lot of words—what I'm getting at is the '34 strike seems to be almost like a major war on the waterfront.

[03:51:07] **JOE:** It was! It was a battle for existence and self-preservation. That's what it was.

[03:51:13] **HOWARD:** Not unlike a war, it sounds like almost. When a nation goes to war, here you had a union going to war.

[03:51:18] **JOE:** Well, a war is an organized proposition by up above, the military or the government. The soldier is just order to go someplace. Now you do this, your obligation and so forth. You're under the subordination of the other people. But in this case, well. . .

[03:51:46] **ELSIE:** You're really on your own, weren't you?

[03:51:48] **JOE:** No, not exactly, Elsie. I would say I was in the position. . . Well, I was above. I was a trustee. I was about 30 years of age, and I was an experienced man. I was a good longshoreman. I knew what I wanted. I think I was influential, probably leading other people, because "if Joe does it, it must be alright." I had a kind of confidence and a feeling that I was the right thing.

[03:52:22] **HOWARD:** Do you think your confidence, having been on the battlefield before, maybe allowed you to sort of take charge?

[03:52:32] **JOE:** Well, the confidence that I had was being on my own since I was 16 years old, mixing with different nationalities, different people. I saw different things in the world. There wasn't very much different between the people here and anyplace else. They're human beings. If you communicate with them, understand them, they're the same as you are. That's the way I looked at, and I still do. I think that it's a wonderful thing. But it's so doggone difficult to get through to people, to communicate with them. Some people, they are set in their ways. Like the employers at that time. They had a dogmatic idea that labor was just nothing. But we knew different. If we could communicate properly and do the right thing, gee, god, we did something for the community.

[03:53:27] **HOWARD:** What about the police who were recruited as special policemen? You said most of them were from eastern Oregon.

[03:53:32] **JOE:** There is a very interesting situation. I knew at that time that some police officers through private ways, you know. They were stockholders in the mine; I was running the mine, and so I knew them. Maybe that gave me some confidence, too. But anyway, we had police officers, older men particularly, that informed us in a background way, what the score was.

[03:54:06] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[03:54:11] **JOE:** Definitely. Now, I couldn't say who did it, and how they did. But I do know that some officers, they were informed. When there was some special breakthrough or something, we were prepared for it.

[03:54:28] **HOWARD:** So, like, if they were going to launch an assault or if the scabs were going to work, you knew these things in advance pretty much?

[03:54:33] **JOE:** We had a darn good idea. So we prepared for it also.

[03:54:37] **HOWARD:** That happened in San Francisco also. Police would oftentimes tell the strikers down there—

[03:54:43] **JOE:** I don't say all the police, but many of them. It would be foolish to mention their names or who they were.

[03:54:50] **HOWARD:** Mm-hmm. It's not important.

[03:54:51] **JOE:** It worked, and we were successful.

[03:54:56] **HOWARD:** What were your feelings towards the police during the strike?

[03:55:01] **JOE:** Just like it is now. They're good guys and bad guys. They're human beings. If you get inside and communicate with them, they're alright.

[03:55:10] **HOWARD:** When he's got a gun to your belly, you're going to communicate with him?

[03:55:14] **JOE:** Well, that's not the point to communicate [laughing] because he communicated through his force and his ability. It was up to me to dare him or to hush up. Simple as that. I knew I was on the losing end, so I thought, I'm going to give in. I didn't have to tell him that, but I just did it.

[03:55:32] **HOWARD:** You weren't at the incident in Terminal Four when the striker was shot, is that right? You weren't there yourself?

[03:55:38] **JOE:** No, I wasn't there. I come in about hour or two hours later.

[03:55:44] **HOWARD:** Do you remember the reaction of the men after that happened? What they were talking about? What they were saying?

[03:55:48] **JOE:** I knew the guy that was shot.

[03:55:51] **HOWARD:** What was his name? Remember?

[03:55:54] **JOE:** Oh, god, I can't remember now. He was an honorable man. I don't know why they shot him. He wasn't really one of the aggressive people. He must have hidden behind a tree or some goddamn mess. Anyway, he was shot. You know how it happened, don't you?

[03:56:14] **HOWARD:** I think so, but go ahead and tell me again.

[03:56:18] **JOE:** They were going to back a train. Not forward with the engine, but back it in there with a couple of cop cars behind the engine. They had to pull in on the inside over to Terminal Four, over the hump. They had several policemen with guns on the slot cars ahead. Anybody got inside, and they shot at them. There was a few trees, right at St. John's [Portland neighborhood] there. I don't know how to explain it. It's a hillside, all big grown trees. That's what they had their back to, kind of a small curve. Naturally, the longshoremen were out there, they set a picket line. When the cops started shooting, they probably hid behind the trees. The engine—here's the idea. If they had put the engine in front, the engineer would have never gone through the picket line.

[03:57:25] **HOWARD:** Oh, I see.

[03:57:26] **JOE:** But when they reverse it, two or three flat cars, the engineer, he couldn't see the picket line. So they kept pushing, pushing the cars through it, and the cops are shooting their way in there. That's the way it happened.

[03:57:38] **HOWARD:** Do you remember anything about greased railings? Somebody said that they greased the rails so the train couldn't advance. Does that ring a bell? The newspaper described it as the Battle of Greasy Gulch. [Elise laughs]

[03:57:50] **JOE:** I don't know if they greased the rail in this instance; they might have. Because it's an uphill pull.

[03:57:54] **HOWARD:** Yeah. So there was an incline there, huh?

[03:57:57] **JOE:** Oh yeah.

[03:57:57] **HOWARD:** I didn't get that from the other account, ok.

[03:58:02] **JOE:** I was arrested on time on the oil docks. They had the picket line, and they were trying to break the picket line. The police, they had used tear gas bombs. I was familiar with those kind of things. So when they threw them, we had heavy gloves, and we just picked and threw them right back at them! I don't know how many guys were there or what happened. A car or truck or something come up. They come from behind us, and they had this clown arresting us. So he took us down to the police station. All the people at that time, there were so many of them, and there was our lawyer there. It was all arranged. I don't know what happened.

[03:59:06] **HOWARD:** How many times did you get arrested during the strike? Do you remember at all? Approximately?

[03:59:14] **JOE:** Really, that I was booked was twice. Other times, there was some kind of defending, the cops decided against it. I don't know how many times.

[03:59:24] **HOWARD:** So you might have been detained several times. Or sort of apprehended, but then they let you go. Is that how it worked?

[03:59:30] **JOE:** No, it didn't work that. It was something, an unwritten law or whatever it is, one thing or another, there was no personal contact with the longshoremen and the police base, as far as I know. If there was, I didn't see it. The police force, they drew their lines, and, if they had a property, like at the Admiral [Lines] dock, they had a machine gun on the roof. They had guardsmen on the doors and one thing or another—if you stepped on the property, it was a no-no. Naturally, you would expect the result of the police force. We knew it, and they knew it. But would it happen? If somebody would sneak in there, they would probably arrest him or shoot him. It would be foolish to do it. Now one time—now there was a funny incident. They had—

[END PART EIGHT/BEING PART NINE]

—informed that the police were going to open up the port and they're going to bring strikebreakers in. They were going to come up Front Street and go down Terminal One, Terminal Two. they're going to lead right up to the port. We were all congregated around, a whole bunch of us. Naturally, they're supposed to stop it. There was no need going through the city, so we were going to go up Ninth Street and meet the guys when they come up Front Street from the south.

Just about the time I got down to about the intersection of Ninth Street and Front Street, there was one truck went by. Two or three guys chased it. I think the second truck, I got in there and [?Toby Christiansen?] —he was on the driver's side—to try to get the driver by the neck. I was on the other side, and he was trying to kick me. I got him by the leg. I took his pants off! Finally he couldn't go up the streets. He branched off and went down the railroad track. He couldn't go with the railroad; he got snagged. Toby fixed that driver up. We really fixed him, really a pretty nasty guy. [inaudible] .

Anyway, the truck didn't get no place. We stopped the whole proceeding. They didn't get there at all. There was four or five other trucks, but there men behind them. There was a whole bunch of them. Finally the city gave it up.

[04:02:38] **HOWARD:** Let me go back to a question on the attempt to open Terminal Four. After the guy was shot, do you remember what the men were talking about, what their feelings were, what they were thinking about? Were you at the hall when that happened or something? Did they all meet later at the hall or something?

[04:03:00] **JOE:** Oh heavens, yes, there were meeting after an occasion like this. There were meetings, board meetings and executive boards and plans made, what to do for it.

[04:03:10] **HOWARD:** What were men saying? What were they talking about?

[04:03:14] **JOE:** Making plans how you're going to succeed.

[04:03:17] **HOWARD:** What did they think about a striker being shot?

[04:03:22] **JOE:** Nobody liked it. The next thing is whose fault was it? It was the fault of the cop who was a reckless guy or. . .It's just one of those things.

[04:03:39] **HOWARD:** Were people pretty agitated over it?

[04:03:41] **JOE:** Sure. A lot of them—it was an encouraging thing—they wanted to go down and risk their own lives to get to the line to get the revenge. But you couldn't do it. You had to use good sense.

[04:03:57] **HOWARD:** What did that mean, "good sense"? [Elsie laughs]

[04:04:00] **JOE:** Well, for instance—

[04:04:01] **HOWARD:** From someone who was arrested twice. Tell me about that.

[04:04:03] **JOE:** "Joe, we'll get you a machine gun. Would you go down and open on them and storm in?" I said, "Hell no. It'd be crazy." "What would you do?" I would tell them, "We have to get the cooperation of the people."

[04:04:18] **HOWARD:** So, did people actually suggest things like "we should go down there with machine guns,"? What I'm trying to get is a sense of what was going through people's minds at the time.

[04:04:27] **JOE:** I told you—fanatics, they would do hand grenades and machine guns, rifles and go down there and storm it. But you can't do that; it's revolution.

[04:04:36] **HOWARD:** There were a group of people who were that agitated?

[04:04:40] **JOE:** You are not kidding! We had to hold them back; otherwise it would have been, my god, the easiest thing in the world. We'd burn the whole thing down. No good.

There is one thing that I have to give Harry Bridges credit. That man, he led a group of people—I don't know how he convinced them—the rank-and-file, let's to do it together. Individual action, no good. Let's meet, let's talk things over. Have a discussion back and forth, and then take a vote. If the rank-and-file decide on doing it, ok. But without it, no. At first, I didn't think very much about Harry. I thought, "oh." But he prevailed. He convinced many other guys, me included, that the majority had to rule.

[04:05:43] **HOWARD:** What about Bridges' role during the '34 strike? Were you aware that he was pretty much leading things from San Francisco? At the time?

[04:05:52] **JOE:** Oh, I knew of him. I'd never met him personally. I knew many other leaders. It wasn't Harry alone that had the brains. There were many others who were reliable people. But somehow Harry has provided some of the ideas that we accepted and prevailed. The rank-and-file was won over. See, Harry was an organized sailor in Australia. I was in Australia, and I know what the Australians were.

There was a Sunday, and the ship wanted to leave on a Sunday. There was only a few loads to be loaded. Their longshoremen—that was on a Saturday. I was a winch driver. I was a sailor, but I could drive winches. They said, "Well, you guys can't work tomorrow. It's Sunday." I said, "Well, we can run the ship. We can take the loads. Why don't you fellows come and just take a few loads?" He says, "You see that sun up there? That is the sun of Australia. As long as that shines, no work." As simple as that. They were organized to such an extent, you just can't shake it. They were Australians.

[04:07:18] **ELSIE:** Good for them! [laughing]

[04:07:21] **JOE:** And Harry was one of them. He's still that way. He may express himself in a very peculiar way. He'll sit in a meeting, and he doesn't say a thing. All of a sudden, he just takes the microphone. He says, Such and such and such, and that's the way it is. The only thing that will protest him is his little wife. He's got a little Japanese wife—

[04:07:47] **HOWARD:** Nikki? [Noriko Sawada Bridges Flynn]

[04:07:48] **JOE:** —and she is cute. She is the only one of them who openly comes and says, "Harry. . . [inaudible] ."

[04:08:00] **HOWARD:** How important do you think was Bridges' role in the '34 strike? That is to say, to the men who identify with him now. Let me rephrase that, it's kind of awkward.

[04:08:11] **JOE:** I don't know how important locally in San Francisco. But, now in southern California, he had difficulties. He also had difficulties in Portland. Portland was a. . . [pause]

[04:08:27] **ELSIE:** A non-union town. Why don't you say it?

[04:08:32] **JOE:** I wouldn't say a non-union town.

[04:08:35] **ELSIE:** I would.

[04:08:37] **JOE:** The Portland longshoremen and the Portland residents at large, they thought Bridges was radical. They really believed it. To some degree, I thought so too. Because I knew the fellows that were opposed to Harry—you know, we had communications back and forth. But I saw some of the results of the people who were united for the socialistic reason—they were better for the working people than those on the other side. That's what I made my decisions on. Oh god, they called Harry a communist, they called him anything in the world. But when you really get to know the man, in his peculiar way, he's a real liberal guy. I say in his peculiar way.

[04:09:48] **ELSIE:** And he's very intelligent.

[04:09:48] **JOE:** He has foresight. He started traveling as a young man, and so was I. I could harmonize with him. Even one time in the convention, I said there was something similar between Harry and I. Harry left when he was a young man. He went in the world and mixed with different people with different tongues. He couldn't

understand, but he knew they were people. He assumed that they were human beings, and he was right. I am the same way. That's the way it is.

You remember that time in Seattle when I talked about it. He come afterwards and said, "Joe, you're alright." I said, "Well, thank you!"

[04:10:31] **HOWARD:** I want to go back a little bit to this flying squad that you were a part of. Do you have a particular feeling of closeness to the members of that flying squad? Or were they just anybody?

[04:10:44] **JOE:** We were all friends.

[04:10:44] **HOWARD:** You were friends.

[04:10:44] **JOE:** We were close friends.

[04:10:46] **HOWARD:** Did that experience draw you any closer together? Experience of working on the flying squad together?

[04:10:54] **JOE:** In a way that you had to rely on it. You know there was a man you could depend on. As a rule, the longshoremen, there were many transients, strangers, outsiders, god knows what. When you were in a group of five men, you never knew what you were going to oppose to. You have to rely on, you have to know them. That's the way it was.

We organized the flying squads— [?Benny Farro?] and I, he had a Buick and I had a Buick. And we changed off so the cops didn't know which car it was. The only thing—I had a sedan, and he had a roadster. Mine was a '27; his was a '28. You had to alternate. You had to work in different schemes. But it worked.

[04:11:51] **HOWARD:** You develop a sense of trust?

[04:11:53] **JOE:** That was the main thing.

[04:11:55] **HOWARD:** Camaraderie?

[04:11:56] **JOE:** Oh yeah. god, we've been friends, [?Fritz?] and I have been friends for years. [?Tom Heller?] . [?Tom Heller?] was the sixth one. We weren't friends, but we worked together in the hold. He was a big Norwegian guy or Swede.

[04:12:12] **ELSIE:** Many of these people are dead now. Joe is one of the few that's still alive.

[04:12:19] **JOE:** I'm the only one that's alive. Well, there is—the only other man—

[04:12:23] **ELSIE:** Toby.

[04:12:24] **JOE:** Toby is another guy. He was in the flying—not in mine, but in another one. He's still alive.

[04:12:28] **HOWARD:** Is [?Jack Mowrey?] still alive?

[04:12:29] **JOE:** Yes. He was not in the flying squad.

[04:12:33] **HOWARD:** He wasn't. Ok.

[04:12:35] **ELSIE:** But he's very, very ill.

[04:12:37] **JOE:** Is he now?

[04:12:37] **ELSIE:** Yeah, he's changed his address.

[04:12:38] **JOE:** [?Jack Mowrey?] 's brother, I think, he was in the flying squad.

[04:12:40] **HOWARD:** I talked with him last time.

[04:12:40] **JOE:** Toby is the only man that I know of now that was really a member of a flying squad.

[04:12:54] **HOWARD:** How about the '34 men. They talk about the '34 men a lot. Is there a sense that you guys were sort of a special group within the union? Obviously not now because there aren't that many of you left, but back in the thirties and forties—

[04:13:12] **JOE:** I know what you mean. Well, in a way. The way it was—after '34, the port opened up. So much work and everything. The main thing, we associated ourselves in gangs with men that could do the work.

I joined a log gang, mainly that there was more money in it, and I'm a special longshoreman, you know? More money, more work—in a way I thought we were kind of preferential. So the other gangs that aligned themselves, they got—but the company gangs were eliminated. It was rank-and-file, rotation work. But the work was distributed amongst the groups who can do the work. Like cargo gangs, special gangs, and whatever it was. That's the distribution that took place.

Until then a big change came during the war. After the war, my god, longshoremen were scarce. Good men were scarce. They kept coming in. Then the Negroes came in. They were trying to force themselves—there were many instances where you had to. . .you had to protect what you had. Or they'd come in and force you right out of it, just like it is today.

[04:15:08] **HOWARD:** Did the '34 men sort of hang together throughout this period or not? You've heard of the term " '34 man" obviously, right?

[04:15:18] **JOE:** I don't know whether there was a. . .We agreed with them, what they were talking about, because we knew—in other words, we had to fight for the conditions and we wanted to secure them. We knew what it meant.

[04:15:32] **HOWARD:** Why'd you know what it meant? How come you guys knew what it meant?

[04:15:36] **JOE:** Security of your job. Now, before '34, you—

[04:15:46] **ELSIE:** That [meaning the audio recorder] can't see your hands!

[04:15:48] **JOE:** Ok. After '34, rotation. You took your turn, or you belonged to a group, and so forth. It was all difference in the world. There was no preferential. There was all everybody. All the earnings—even if you worked in a gang, your gang, after they collect the earnings, you were dispatched according to the earnings. That made a big difference. If you would relax that kind of conditions, you were right back the way you started.

[04:16:22] **HOWARD:** Did the '34 men or the people who went through the strike have more credibility or more influence in the union, do you think?

[04:16:32] **JOE:** They had influence. Credibility? It all depends who they were! If they were good men—to be a longshoreman, you have to work many, many years and be able to do different kinds of work. You have no idea the qualifications a longshoreman has to have.

[04:16:53] **HOWARD:** The reason I ask that is because I read over convention proceedings and minutes before. It seems like one way of sort of saying, “Hey, look, I know what I’m talking about,” is guys get up, and they say, “I know about longshoring. I went through the ‘34 strike.” And then they start talking. It’s almost a way of, like, putting a badge on and saying, “Look, I was there. I know what I’m talking about.” So I’m trying to get at whether the ‘34 men had a special identity or a special sort of togetherness.

[04:17:21] **JOE:** What you are saying—there is something to that. But in some cases, probably went over but not all around. Probably what is the reason—to be able to be a longshoreman in ‘34, you had to be a longshoreman. To be active in ‘34 and maintain still the ability to be a longshoreman, that required a special personality. So, therefore, “I was a ‘34 longshoreman”—that spoke for itself. But the many hoosiers [slang for yokels] , they didn’t work. [laughing]

But, as a rule, they were listened to. They were probably—maybe they had a preference; I don’t know. Not a preference in work, but they were influential.

[04:18:33] **HOWARD:** Did you feel a sense of brotherhood towards other ‘34 men, by virtue of the fact that maybe they had gone through the same set of experiences?

[04:18:40] **JOE:** Definitely.

[04:18:41] **HOWARD:** You did definitely feel that?

[04:18:42] **JOE:** Because I knew a few guys from work. But then, they couldn’t all be big-shots and courageous guys. But they contributed in some way or another. That was worthwhile.

[04:18:58] **HOWARD:** So there was a sense that the ‘34—I’m calling them a generation in the union, a distinct generation—does that make sense in your mind?

[04:19:06] **JOE:** [laughing] The generation after the war, the generation during the ‘34 episode—no comparison. When you compare the working man’s situation before ‘34, it was misery. You have to do almost unbelievable things to succeed and remain. Now, those guys, they don’t have to fight for it. It’s all given to them! They don’t—it’s just no comparison.

[04:19:46] **HOWARD:** Ok, so part of what made that generation unique is that they had gone through the period of the transformation of the union from really being weak to being strong.

[04:19:55] **JOE:** The biggest period of transformation was in the 1950s, ‘50-‘51. I’ll tell you what brought it on. It was during the time of mechanization. There was really the big transformation. I’ll tell you the reason for it. To load the ship in those early days took many, many men and lots of hard work. The people who worked for the union, they wanted to maintain all the employment possible. They didn’t want to give it up. They were willing to do many things to maintain it. Then when mechanization time came up, the question was, how are we going to cut the number of men that are not necessary and still keep peace in the family for those remaining parts? Now who the mastermind was of that, I really don’t know. It was several of us. But the point was, let’s accept mechanization but divide the dividends on the mechanization to all concerned.

We called it M&M money, mechanization money. That included many things, compensation, money deposited for the future to come. That was the first beginning, and it was presented to the employers, to us, to the advisory. Finally when it came to the agreement, and the mechanization process was signed and agreed to, that was a big change on the waterfront. It changed not suddenly but gradually. Ships changed; they were built different. Commodities were handled different. The result was unbelievable. It was to the benefit of the employers, the shippers, and to the benefit of the longshoremen.

But, in a few years' time, that's it. That's easy. We had a time, like winch drivers and men that were not [inaudible] jobs, which changed two hours on, two hours off. Then they said, "Oh, heck, I'll take four hours off, you take four hours off." They just started to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. You couldn't stop it. They took advantage of things. I couldn't even tell you what they do nowadays. But I'll tell you this much—if you get up there and you can handle a crane, and handle tons and tons of weight, all in your hands, and you take it from the ship to the dock or vice versa, if you're not used to it, you shake like that. I know others retired many years. I was on a ship one time, and the guy said, "Come on, Joe, take in a load." It was simple. I took two loads—I'm telling you, my hands sweated. They were shaking. It's the strain.

[04:23:14] **ELSIE:** The time in between, it's so great. You jump from 1934 to 1950, and from 1950 to 1980!

[04:23:29] **JOE:** Elsie, that's the process of change. It's a gradual change. There were many strikes before mechanization was approved of. You know. People had to go on the picket line, and they had to go and starve to death to be able—but they stuck together.

[04:23:50] **ELSIE:** May I say something on that score? Joe was, and is, a very forceful speaker. During the strikes, when people were having a bad time to pay their bills—they couldn't pay any of their bills. The water would be turned off. The electricity was turned off, and so on down the line. What Joe did is something that very few of them could do. He went around to the companies and managed to talk to the head man and get them to turn the water or the power, whatever it was, to turn it back on. And to trust the longshoremen that they were trying to do the right thing, and they would square up later. But Joe managed to do that because he's very forceful.

[04:25:02] **JOE:** Honey, I went before the meeting. You know, there was a proposition laid down. There were so many men losing their homes; they're cold. A lot of this was during the strike. I said, "Well, I make a resolution that this union will back up all the obligation that this man needs after the strike is finished. And the union has to back it up. If I get the backing of the union, I'll go to the employers, to the authorities, and I'll correct the issue. Ok?" And I did. I went to the water bill; I went to the banks.

I'll tell you a funny incident with a bank that had mortgages on the homes. There were certain fellows who couldn't live up to the mortgage. They called me up, and I went, and another fellow with me went down to the bank. I said, "Now, what is this all about? Why do you force this man out? He's on strike." "Well, he couldn't pay his mortgage," and the bank blah blah blah blah." I said, "Well, who owns the mortgage?" "Oh, we don't know. It's the bank." So I thought, how in god's name am I going to find out who the owner of the mortgage is? So I went down to the city building with all the mortgages, and I asked the woman what I wanted. "Oh, I'll show you." And she showed me all the banks.

The bank told me who I wanted was a lady in Florida; she owned the homes. I wanted to know how I'm going to get in touch with a lady in Florida. She said, "You know, check down the thing." I wrote it all down, and it was a bank on Third Street and Washington. They owned all of them. Boy, that's really something! So I went down to the bank, and I asked for the head guy. "Well there's the man." He was sitting right there. I said, "Didn't you tell me the lady in Florida owns all the buildings that you are sitting to finish off?" He kind of

smiled for me. I said, “Why?” “I’m just finding out the mortgage holder is you fellows. Wait here in the bank. I just verified there.” He knew what I was talking about. I said, “Are you still trying to blame that lady over there in Florida and kick that man out of his home?” He said, “When the strike is over, you come and ask me, and I’ll give you a job.” [all laugh] That’s the way it was.

[04:27:53] **HOWARD:** So you guys must have been a real tight unit, the ‘34 men. You took care of one another.

[04:27:59] **JOE:** We had to! We didn’t have to, but it was just—if you fight a battle that you’re convinced you’re in the right position and you’re doing the right thing, you’d be surprised how quickly your mind will grasp ideas that will lead you.

[04:28:19] **HOWARD:** That’s beautiful. That’s what I wanted to hear. Ok. That’s what I wanted to hear.

[END PART NINE]